

“VANDYKE-BROWN”

POEMS



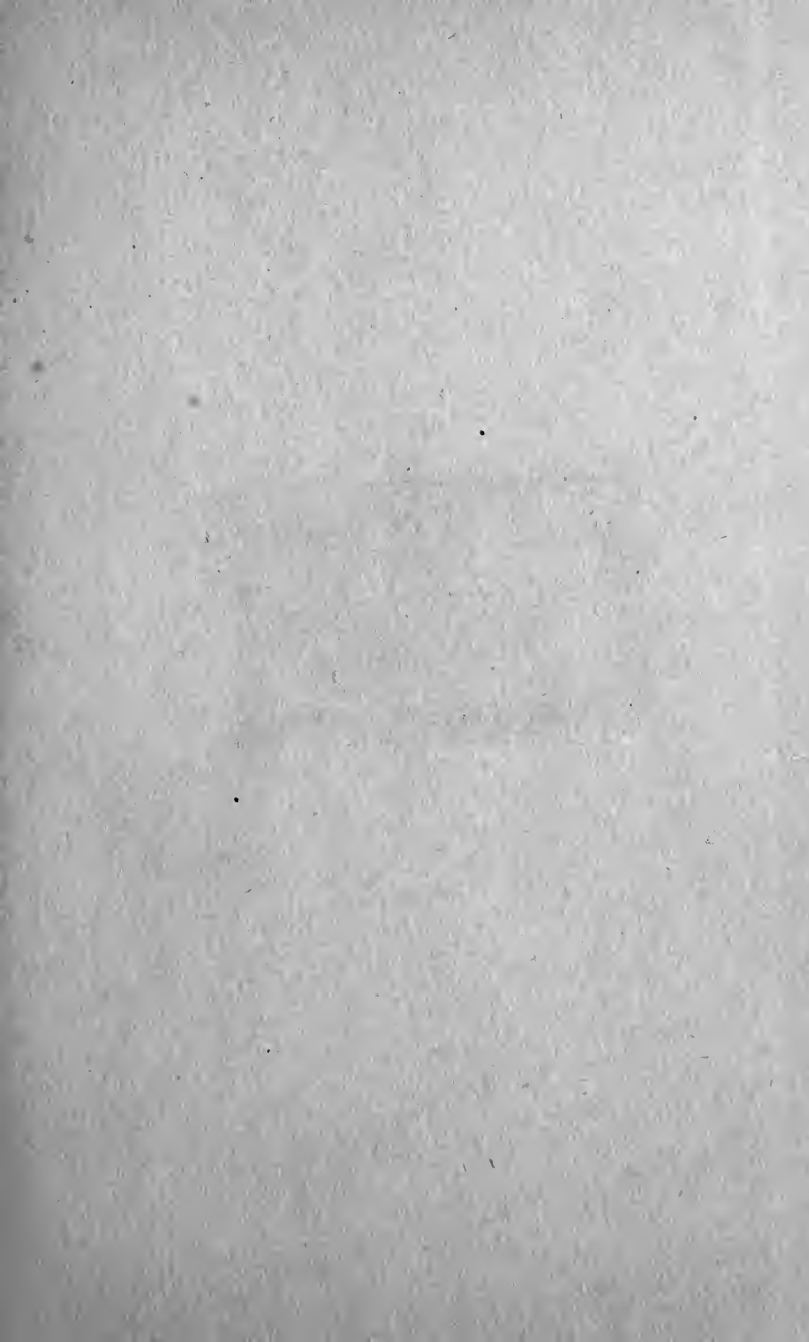
MARC COOK

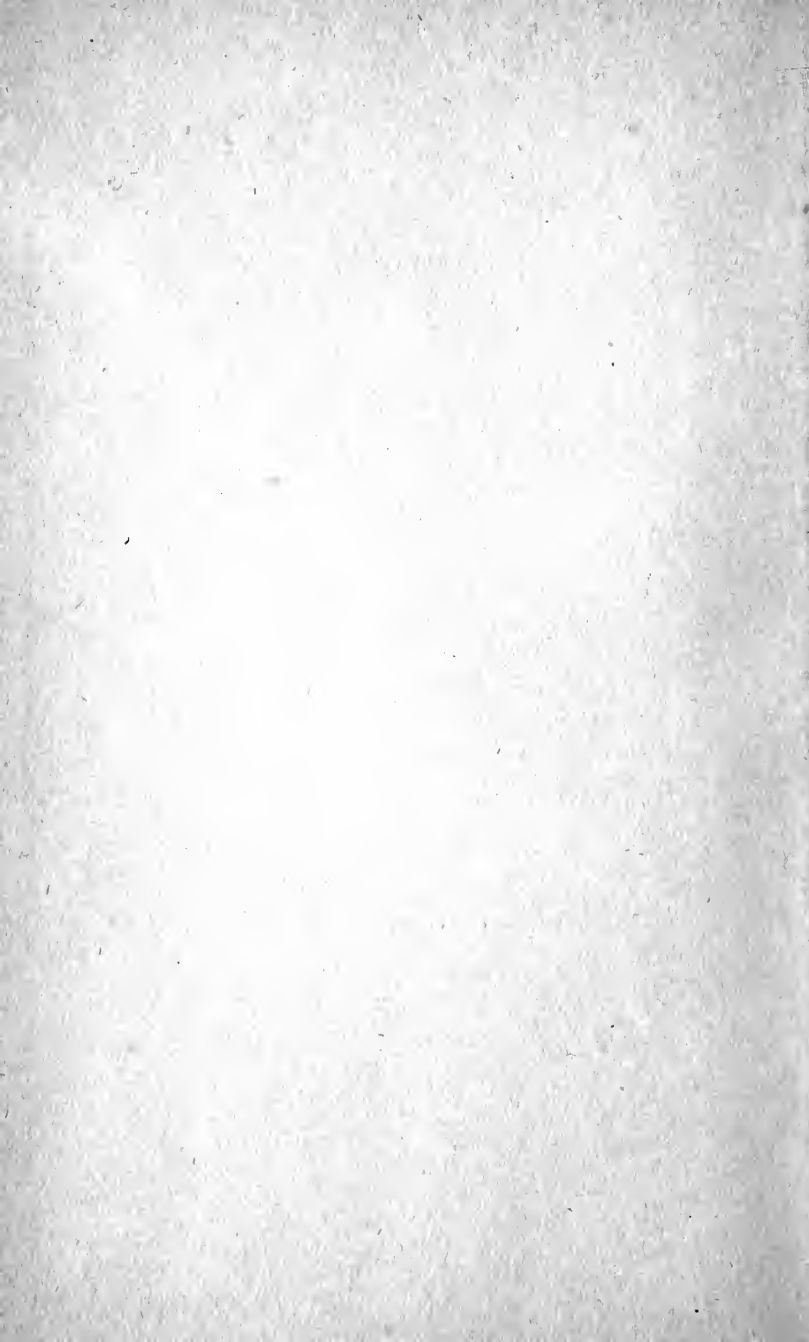
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Marc Cook.

"VANDYKE-BROWN" POEMS

By MARC COOK

WITH

PRÉFATORY WORDS BY HAROLD FREDERIC

AND

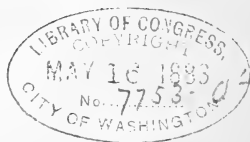
A TRIBUTE TO THE AUTHOR

BY

PROF. EDWARD NORTH

33

Edited by his Wife



BOSTON

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THE LOST STAR.

IN MEMORY OF MARC COOK.

*THE world seems sad and lone and gone,
As if some life-tie was withdrawn —
Some star that filled the shining space
Grew dim and faded from its place.*

*We look above in mute despair —
We find each star still shining there —
Each one has its appointed goal,
They circle still around the pole.*

*There is no orb, no star, withdrawn —
'T is only our star that is gone ;
The rest still blaze and light the dome —
The wanting star is in our home !*

*Lost star, within what brighter sky,
Where suns and planets never die —
In what new realms of boundless space
Can we thy distant orbit trace ?*

*We see it only in our dreams —
How bright and beautiful it seems ! —
As all life's hopes are lost and gone ;
With all these stars — yet wanting one !*

JOHN R. PEASE.

PREFATORY WORDS.

WORSE than the terrors of dissolution itself is the fear that death may bring forgetfulness. The oldest graven records of the race are barriers raised to stop this dread oblivion, — at once a protest against the effacing march of generations and a plea for posterity's attention, pitiful in its very helplessness. "Let his name be forgotten," was the sternest and most merciless form of ancient condemnation.

A tender and reverent wish to hold Death back from this, his final triumph, inspires the publication of this volume. The author of the poems, which are now first given to the public in a permanent habit, had in his nature that excessive modesty which prompts the habitual masking of work beneath a *nom de plume*. To his timid temperament even the warm words and appreciation of a circle of close friends seemed too great a fame, which he shrank from

appearing to court. These friends have looked their last upon him on earth. They have followed him to the grave, dismayed to dumbness by the seeming cruelty which robbed them of his life before yet it had reached the fruiting period of manhood. It is left them only to gather these blossoms of his promise, and seek for their fragrance and loveliness that recognition at the hands of his fellow-men which he could not bring himself to ask.

The early life of Marc Cook was filled with prophecies of its ultimate achievements. His power of memorizing, his felicity of expression, and his graceful declamation were all prominent in childhood. The fire of genius, which maturing displays itself in these poems, proclaimed itself in his first attempts at verse. At twelve he wrote his poem which was afterwards christened and published as "Prince Tare." Prepared for a class exhibition, it was voted "the best of the evening" by the audience present. A little later he commenced journalism on his own account, established and published a semi-monthly paper, entitled "The Boy's Companion." This was followed by "The Enterprise," — a monthly of more pretentious character, — the joint product of himself and his life-long and cherished

friend, E. M. Rewey, of the "New York Sun." Meanwhile he was preparing for college, and entered Hamilton at the age of sixteen.

In athletic sports he was usually awarded a leadership among his fellows. In the college gymnasium he had few equals. He lived much in these years of health. But they were few! As his physical energies declined, however, his poetical genius glowed with intenser radiance. The prophecies of his youth fulfilled, he henceforth lived in the poet's corner of existence, where impressions are events, and fancies are calculated facts. A more purely "literary" temperament than his, no American has ever been given.

He was the son of a clergyman, and was born in Providence, although his childhood and youth — and, all too soon, his closing days — were passed in Utica. From the very dawn of boyish dreams of a vocation, he was a writer. In all the grades of his school life he was the verse-maker and composer of his class. His thirst for active labor in the field of journalism drew him from college just before the close of his senior year. His connection with regular newspaper work in Worcester, Brooklyn, New York, and elsewhere, was fugitive from the first, and after 1875 was

abandoned altogether. His prose contributions to magazines and the press were in demand before that date and after it, and they embrace some short stories and sketches, to find a parallel for which in originality, force, and magic of style, we must go back to Poe. But he was essentially a singer, a writer of verse, and it has been deemed best to present him to the public solely in that light. The large majority of his poems were first printed in the "New York Clipper" under the pseudonym of "Vandyke Brown," and thence found their way into the newspapers of the land.

In 1879 the ravages of consumption forced him to leave New York and steady work, and the experiment of a sojourn in the Adirondacks was tried. For a time this experiment promised success. His symptoms improved and hope revived. During this period, with the new life inspired by the mountains, he wrote the volume afterwards published by William Wood & Co., of New York, entitled "The Wilderness Cure." He traced in his own case an illustration of its efficacy.

Returning to Utica, October 22, 1880, he found in the pleasant autumn air, in the society of his friends, and in the sympathies and loves of home,

still further encouragement, and fancied to himself a brightening future. And now he gave expression to his hope in that exquisitely written and pathetically sanguine article called "Camp Lou," published in "Harper's Magazine" of May, 1881. In this article he told — poor boy! — the story of the cure which seventeen months in the Adirondacks had effected. It attracted wide attention, and appearing before the publication of his "Wilderness Cure," it did much to prepare the way for an extensive sale of that charming book.

But alas for the hopes of the consumptive! Recurring frequently, let us learn to regard them as resting-places along the dreary pathway to the grave, — as oases in the desert of decay. Marc Cook died on the 4th of October, 1882, in the twenty-ninth year of his age.

Whether we study his dainty *vers de société*, his quaintly whimsical burlesques, his closely-knit thoughtful poems of serious subjects, or his last unspeakably mournful salutations of approaching death, we find revealed a soul as true and gentle, an eye as shrewd and searching, and a hand as deft and sure of touch, as any to which American readers do honor. Amazing as was his versatility, ranging the gamut of human

emotions, from the merry laugh in "The Five-Cent Restaurant" to the shuddering echoes of the "Church-yard Bell," his work is all clean and wholesome. No sensuous swell of forbidden music charms away our will, no prurient thought parades itself, wrapped in beguiling imagery, as virtue. The satire is manly. The mirth is honest. Grave or gay, fanciful or deeply earnest, the poems are all finely typical of the man who thought out and felt and loved them. It was the privilege of but few to know him in the flesh. The whole world may know him now as he lives again in this little book, and be the better for it.

HAROLD FREDERIC.

ALBANY, March, 1883.

A TRIBUTE.

THE following affectionate tribute of Prof. Edward North, of Hamilton College, will be read with interest as giving a glimpse of Mr. Cook's college life: —

“I seldom met him outside of his college class-room. There his personality was clearly asserted. He was as distinctly and independently himself in making a Greek recitation, as in weaving unlooked-for rhymes for the ‘College Monthly.’ He could enliven the weary dulness of the class-room with very creditable mistakes. Virgil’s ‘Equo ne crèdite, Teucric,’ it would be just like him to render, as if by inspired authority, ‘Don’t ride a pony, boys.’ For himself, he had no need of such aid.

“When a junior in college, Rev. Dr. James H. Ecob, now of Albany, read a memorable essay full of original thought, on ‘The Untranslatable in Greek Poetry.’ It was a confession of the trouble he had in efforts to reproduce to other minds, through another language, the

subtle music and lofty sentiment that charmed his own soul in the close rhythms of Æschylus and Sophocles. Marc Cook was like Dr. Ecob in his quick sympathy with what is highest and sweetest in rhythmic expression. Yet the two men present some points of decided contrast. As students, both heartily enjoyed 'The Untranslatable in Greek Poetry.' Both had a surprising cleverness in

‘Untwisting all the chains that tie
The Attic soul of harmony,’

by some other way than very severe bondage to grammar and lexicon. Where James H. Ecob was like Milton’s ‘Il Penseroso,’

‘Sober, steadfast and demure,’

Marc Cook was like ‘L’Allegro’ in his passion for

‘Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles,
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.’

“Marc Cook was a boy to the last—a joyous, open-hearted, generous, lovable boy, even in the pitiless clutches of wasting disease and pain. Probably those who were nearest to him would testify that he never could have been other than a boy, had he lived to be threescore and ten. In his temperament, as reflected by his writings, the pathetic and the humorous were closely interwoven, as they often will be in Nature’s most richly gifted.

“What Mr. Cook would have done for our land’s literature, had his years been lengthened, it would now be useless to conjecture. We can gratefully rejoice that he has left so much to preach to us that ‘gospel of relaxation,’ which Herbert Spencer urges our pressing need of. We can rejoice that in coming days of gladness, should they ever come, his frolic muse will remind us of other hours that were brightened by his wit and brilliant gifts.”

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFATORY WORDS	v
A TRIBUTE	xi
L'ENVOI	i
SOMETIME	3
THE IMMORTAL CITY.	6
HER CROSS	8
WAITING	10
NOW THAT THE DAY IS DONE	13
THE NIGHT THAT BABY DIED	16
RETROSPECT	18
A FAREWELL	20
DEAD TO-DAY	22
THE UNKNOWN SINGER	25
AWAITING THE END	27
OLE BULL	29
THE WORLD STILL GOOD	32
MY BOYHOOD'S HOME	33
OVER THE RUINS	35
THE BOY THAT I KNEW	38
NOTHING UNDER THE SUN IS NEW	41
THE LOVE THAT WAS	43
MY LAST LOVE	44

	PAGE
THE POOR POET'S SCRAP-BOOK	46
THE BABY'S PICTURE	48
IN EXTREMIS	50
A NOVEMBER REVERIE	52
THE TWO WISHERS	55
IN GREENWOOD	58
SONNET ON EDWIN ADAMS	60
A CIRCUS MEMORY	61
EDELWEISS	63
THE SPARROW	65
THE BLACKSMITH KING	67
DEAD YESTERDAY	70
OCTOBER	71
WHY DO THE WRINKLES COME?	73
CITY VIOLETS	75
THANKSGIVING REFLECTIONS	78
A NEW PHILOSOPHER	81
NEW LAMPS FOR THE OLD	84
THE LIGHTHOUSE	86
THE OLD STAGE-HORSE	88
TIME'S TOUCH	91
TALKING IT OVER	96
OLD SLEDGE	99
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO	101
SKATING	103
THE CIRCUS	105
PLAYING BILLIARDS	108
AN HONEST CONFESSION	110
THE FLIGHT OF THE SWALLOW	113
ANTHONY'S PRAYER	115
GROWING OLD	118

CONTENTS.

xvii

	PAGE
AFTER THE HOLIDAYS	120
TO LADY CLARICE	123
MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO	125
MARCH	128
THE GLORIOUS FOURTH	130
MY FIRST VALENTINE	133
HIS IDEA OF EDEN	136
UNRHYMED SORROW	139
THE CITY ROOSTER	141
MY PIPE	143
THE COUNTY FAIR	146
HER OPINION OF THE PLAY	149
THE QUEEN OF HEARTS	152
THE WEATHER IN VERSE	154
TO A PRETTY SCHOOLMA'AM	157
A SONG	160
FLORA TEMPLE	162
UP IN A BALLOON	164
BETWEEN THE ACTS	166
THE WINNING SUIT	171
VERY TANTALIZING	173
ROCKET	175
THE FAME UNSOUGHT	182
STAR-LOVE	184
IN THE MUSEUM	187
AUTUMN LEAVES	190
HIS PRETTIEST TRICK	193
MY NOBLE RIVAL	199
A CURIOUS WANT	202
AZARIAH E. BRIERY, AND HIS DIARY	204
HOW THE CATCHER WAS CAUGHT	206

	PAGE
THE FREE TICKET	209
THE CASE OF YOUNG BROWN	212
AT THE DAIRY FAIR.	215
THE CANNIBAL'S LOVE	217
ODE TO AUTUMN	224

“VANDYKE-BROWN” POEMS.

POEMS.



L'ENVOI.

A FRESHENING odor from the new-ploughed
fields,

A smell of earth, moist, rarefied and good,
With fainter scent of buds the soft breeze yields
Blowing, to-day, from meadowland and wood.

It cools the feverish brow of one who sang
In humble strain of many a bygone Spring,
And who once more takes up, with inward pang,
His lyre, once more and only once to sing.

Around about in everything behold
The promise of new life in nature mute :
The buried seed shall grow to wheaten gold,
The bursting bud shall turn to ripened fruit.

But long before the harvest-time is come,
Or Autumn wears again her gorgeous crown,
The singer's lips forever will be dumb,
The weary burden of his life laid down.

Ah, well ! If hard it seems that he alone
Can find no hope in Spring's life-laden breath,
Still let his last song be no wailing moan,
For, loving life, he yet can smile at death.

And sweet it is to think upon those days
When hotly burned Ambition in his veins,
When yet he dreamed of winning fame and praise
By tuning this weak lyre to lofty strains.

Sweet, too, the memory of those halcyon times
When Love first blossomed richly in his soul —
A mighty love that mocked his little rhymes,
And rounded life into a perfect whole.

Full rare the hours with old companions spent
Or dreamed away in Summer afternoons,
When dreaming brought a lotus-sweet content,
And life's hard crosses seemed as precious boons.

Let these and kindred memories be the themes
Of this the singer's last and simple song,
For through the darkness of his pathway gleams
A light that never yet has led man wrong.

He dies unknown, and with the melodies
He could not voice in life locked in his breast —
What's this? A chill has come upon the breeze :
The lyre falls. The singer is at rest !

SOMETIME.

FOREVER my heart is stirred
By the magic that lies in the word
“Sometime.”

When the burdens of life are heavy to bear,
I say to myself: Sometime, somewhere,
An end will come to all my care —
Sometime, sometime.

I shall find the heart that beats for me,
Rich with beauty the world will be,
My ship shall come sailing over the sea,
Sometime, sometime.

Sometime, I know,
Fresh roses will blow
In place of these that are lying low.
The sun will melt the drifts of snow,
And life will burn with a roseate glow —
Sometime, sometime.

Sometime the shadows which darken my way
Shall rise like the mist of the morning gray,
Revealing the splendors of glorious day —
Sometime, sometime.

My soul shall be warmed by the sun's own light,
My heart shall be glad and the world grow bright,
And forever shall vanish the black, black night —
Sometime, sometime.

When peace is fled,
And hope seems dead,
I live in the glory of Sometime ;
I whisper the story of Sometime ;
I weave into rhyme the beautiful time,
The radiant, rose-colored Sometime.
Sometime the day shall borrow
The splendor that gilds the morrow ;
Sometime the burden of sorrow
Will fall at my feet.
Sometime the beautiful only
Shall brighten my pathway lonely,
And life will be sweet !

O, the golden, glorious Sometime !
The marvellous, magical Sometime !
The strivings and yearnings, the heartaches and burn-
ings,
The bitter despairings and mournings and spurnings,
Will cease with the dawn of Sometime.
No monarch who ever has sat on a throne
In all his dominions could claim for his own
So rare, so fair a possession as this —

The realm where the golden possible lies,
Shut out from the vision of grosser eyes,
 Encircled about in a halo of bliss.

So forever my heart is stirred
By the magic that lies in the word
 "Sometime."

And when all the sands of my life are told,
And death lays hands on me icily cold,
Where the great throne stands my eyes shall behold
The white-robed bands in the streets of gold —
 Sometime, sometime.

THE IMMORTAL CITY.

BY the city of the living
 (So Etruscan legends run)
Stood another silent city,
 Stretching toward the setting sun.

And above this city brooded,
 Like a mighty black-winged bird,
Silence so intense that never
 Sound of any kind was heard,

Save when on its iron hinges
 Open swung the massive gate
To admit another dweller,
 Weary of his earthly fate.

In the city of the living
 All was bustle, stir and strife —
Whirred the wheels of ceaseless action,
 Flowed the myriad streams of life.

People planned and worked and suffered,
 Children laughed, and lovers sighed ;
Youth, hot-blooded, dreamed of glory,
 Age looked on and smiled, and died !

Maidens heard again the story,
Ever old, yet ever new ;
And to eyes unused to weeping
Earth took on a radiant hue.

But through all the din and tumult,
Lo ! the city just outside
Lay, as ever, wrapped in silence,
Waiting for the next who died !

In its streets no sound of laughter
Ever broke upon the air ;
In its palaces and dwellings
Only silence, everywhere !

Yet there came unto this city
Such a never-ending tide
That it needs must stretch its borders
Wider yet and yet more wide.

So, by slow degrees encroaching
Where the living had pulled down,
In the end the silent city
Swallowed up the bustling town.

And to-day — so runs the legend —
But one city rears its head ;
That alone has proved immortal,
Though the city of the dead.

HER CROSS.

SHE came and sat beside him, saying :
“ No gift to me the muses gave,
But if, your stronger will obeying,
My hand can be your mind's meek slave,
Then let me — oh, I pray you, let me —
(For you are weaker than you think)
Write down the burning thoughts that fret you —
That live imprisoned in that ink ! ”

So came it that, through weary hours
(Alas ! that man for bread must fight),
He mustered still his waning powers
And spake the words for her to write ;
And she, who held him nearer, dearer,
Than life below or heaven above,
Could only call on God to hear her,
To ease the labor of her love !

Still grasped he with unsteady fingers
The phantoms hidden in the ink,
Reflecting that, while life's flame lingers,
'T is right to labor, toil and think.

Perchance the world will smile hereafter
At some bright fancy it has read,
Nor guess that he who caused its laughter
While laughing lay upon death's bed !

How eagerly her quick ear listened
To catch the low words which he spoke ;
How lovingly her bright eyes glistened,
As by a master-touch he woke
Some tender chord that thrilled her being ! —
Ah, had the world been half as quick
His gentle genius in foreseeing,
He had not lain there deathly sick !

The little muse that sang so often
Is cold and mute and voiceless now ;
What tongue of censure would not soften
In presence of that pallid brow ?
Tears — tears for her whose fingers taper —
Last traced the fancies he could think :
She wrote — 't was with her heart for paper !
She wrote — 't was with her blood for ink !

WAITING.

TELL me, O sounding sea ! I pray,
Eternally undulating,
Where is the good ship that sailed away,
Once, on a long-gone Summer's day —
Sailed and left me waiting?

No braver ship was ever seen,
As over the sunlit waters
She glided on with stately mien
Of a fair, white-vested ocean queen —
A queen among Neptune's daughters.

Her sails were white as the wings of a dove —
Alas, for the fate she was daring !
Gayly she rode the waves above,
Gayly, as if all conscious of
The precious freight she was bearing.

And never before sailed ship from shore
With a cargo half so precious ;
Youth, hope and love my good ship bore,
And all the fair visions that came no more
In sadder days to refresh us.

Yes, hope and love, the dreams of fame,
Youth's sweet self-satisfaction,
Ambition, which kindles the blood to flame,
The lusty longing to win a name
On life's broad field of action :

All these my good ship bore away —
With such rare treasures freighted
She sailed on that long-flown Summer's day :
How long it is no tongue can say —
Yet still have I waited — waited !

And ever this barren shore have I paced
With eyes still wearily straining,
Gazing out on the water's waste,
Where naught remains of the faith that I placed
In the blue waves, uncomplaining.

And so, through the long and desolate years,
Have I watched for my ship's returning ;
Watched and waited 'mid doubts and fears,
Waited and watched, when the scalding tears
Adown my cheeks were burning.

The seasons have gone and rolled away,
Each with its burden freighted,
But whether December or whether May,
In flush of the morn or twilight gray,
Still have I waited — waited !

The busy world to the New has turned,
 Its pulses palpitating ;
Again have life's bitter lessons been learned,
And hands have labored and hearts have burned,
 While I for my ship have been waiting.

But now I am weary and hope is flown,
 And the sea's sad undulating
Breaks on my ear like a dismal moan :
My ship has gone down in the waters unknown,
 And vain has been all my waiting !

NOW THAT THE DAY IS DONE.

THE sun goes down in his regal glory,
The sun goes down, for the day is done ;
With darkness ends forever the story
Which first in the rosy morn was begun.
What if this day were the final one ?
For good or for evil, 't is written forever —
One page in the book of Time which never
Can altered be by human endeavor,
Now that the day is done !

In the deepening twilight I sit and ponder
On all that this vanished day may have brought ;
Has it filled the promise of morn, I wonder ?
Have its hours with pleasure or pain been fraught ?
Shall we ever regret that its course is run ?
How many who bravely went forth in the morning,
All fear of possible danger scorning,
Lie stark and cold — oh, pitiful warning ! —
Now that the day is done !

How many thousands in anguish and sorrow
Are watching the shadows of night descend,
For this dying Day was once that To-morrow
On which they counted as on a friend.

But, alas, for the friend that they leaned upon !
He has proved the traitor to mock and deceive them —
His sunshine has been but a cheat to bereave them —
And naught but the dregs in the cup does he leave them
Now that the day is done !

Some maiden, I fancy, impatient, has waited
The dawn of this fairest and rarest of days,
And to-night, with her true love happily mated,
She watches the sun's last lingering rays.
Ah, would that the morn had just begun !
For sweet unto her this day which has given,
Through lenses which only Love's hand could have riven,
One glorious glimpse of a lover's heaven —
Now that the day is done !

But in many a home that was filled with gladness
When the morning broke, there stalks to-night
A phantom that turns all joy into sadness,
That casts on all coming time its blight.
(Alas, that the day was ever begun !)
And little it comforts those hearts in sorrow
To know that the sun will rise on the morrow —
His rays can never their old charm borrow,
Now that the day is done !

By just one day is the old world older,
By just one day are we nearer the end.
Have hearts grown warmer, or have they grown colder?
Have we raised up the weak or assisted a friend?
What if this day were the final one?
From the flush of the morn to the sun's last setting
The world has been toiling and striving and fretting,
And what has been gained that was worth the getting,
Now that the day is done?

THE NIGHT THAT BABY DIED.

NO black-plumed hearse goes slowly sweeping by,
No suits of woe nor masks of misery,
No long procession winding to the tomb
Its serpent length of simulated gloom ;
Only one carriage and two mourners there,
Who on the other seat a burden bear —
A little, pinewood coffin, rudely stained
To imitate a fabric finer-grained.
Who would suppose that that small box contained
The hopes, the fears, the joys, the exultant pride,
Which in the cruel dark were crucified,
The night that Baby died?

Poor Baby ! what a gleam of glory lit
Yon wretched hovel when he brightened it
With his sweet presence of a Winter morn !
Say not that he to poverty was born,
For from the first his blue, contented eyes
Reflected visions of serener skies.
He saw, beyond the world that round us lies,
That far-off shore whose outline seems so dim ;
He found companions in the seraphim,

And all the wealth of Heaven belonged to him.
Its pearly portals angels opened wide,
The night that Baby died.

He was not poor, but very poor were they
To whom he came — brief sunshine of their day —
The only sunshine that was ever lent
To light the gloom of their dark tenement.
And when he fell into the final sleep,
Their hearts were torn by agony so deep
That, bending over him, they could not weep,
But gazed upon him in their dumb despair,
Upon the little face supremely fair,
The aureole glory of his yellow hair,
Then hugged the grief to which tears were denied,
The night that Baby died.

Dear Lord ! who art the poor man's friend and shield,
Be with that carriage in the Potter's Field ;
Command the white wings of the Holy Ghost
To cover them, who need thy healing most.
And when upon the little coffin lid
The dull earth falls — the poor pine box is hid —
Though no priest pray and never prayer is said,
Be thou with them to sanctify their dead.
And though their lives through tortuous paths be led,
Teach them to know, whatever is denied,
They gained the love of Him, the crucified,
The night that Baby died.

RETROSPECT.

SIT down here beside me, my sweet Genevieve ;
Hold my hands in your own, as you held them
of old.

This hour of twilight has power to weave
All threads of the past into fabric of gold.

It comes as of yore with its odor of flowers,
With prodigal richness of deeply-green leaves,
This queen-month of Summer — it comes, and its hours
Of twilight are those to which my soul cleaves.

And pleasant it is for the hour to lie here,
Forgetful of ills that have been or may be ;
I think, Genevieve, but for you I would die here,
And so end the contest betwixt Death and me.

For the fight has been long and painful and weary —
Ah, love, could I only have borne it alone !
The days leaden-houred, the nights sad and dreary,
The anguish of body and mind I have known —

Could this cross have been mine alone to carry,
I had not murmured, though crushed by the blow ;
Alas, that when Love and Suffering marry,
The pangs of each the other must know !

Do you sometimes think, my sweet Genevieve,
How brightly before us the future once gleamed?
How often of old on a Summer-eve
Have we sat in Love's sweet silence and dreamed? —

Of all the beautiful things that should be :
Of the wonderful deeds I should some day do,
When every honor that came to me
Should be a love-offering unto you?

Fair, oh fair was that sunset vision,
Seen through the diamond lens of Love ;
Forever we wandered in fields of Elysian,
A Heaven around us, a Heaven above !

And this is the end of all our dreaming !
Ah, sweet Genevieve, the hot tears start —
How bitter the real as compared with the seeming,
How black the To-day which was once a part

Of that roseate Future that opened before us !
God pity us both, and pity all
Who are stricken thus, for now hangs o'er us
Naught save the shadow of the pall !

And yet, Genevieve, though Misery has found us,
We, likewise, have found how mighty is Love ;
If faded forever the Heaven around us,
Forever awaits us the Heaven above !

A FAREWELL.

COME not to my grave with your mournings,
With your lamentations and tears,
With your sad forebodings and fears :
When my lips are dumb,
Do not come !

Bring no long train of carriages,
No hearse crowned with waving plumes,
Which the gaunt glory of Death illumines ;
But with hands on my breast
Let me rest.

If, in my fair youthtime, attended
By hope and delight every day,
I could spurn the sweet baseness of clay,
Can you honor me, try
Till you die ?

Insult not my dust with your pity,
Ye who 're left on this desolate shore,
Still to suffer and lose and deplore —
'T is I should, as I do,
Pity you !

For me no more are the hardships,
The bitterness, heartaches and strife,
The sadness and sorrow of life,
But the glory divine —
This is mine !

Poor creatures ! Afraid of the darkness,
Who groan at the anguish to come,
How silent I go to my home !
Cease your sorrowful bell :
I am well !

DEAD TO-DAY.

DEAD to-day.

This is December which you call May ;
The fragrance of old is gone from these
Blossoms that hang on the apple-trees ;
Even the lilac's heavy perfume
Brings but a hint of the silent tomb.
There is no beauty in earth or sky,
 No melody sweet in the song of birds,
For all the streams of my soul are dry,
 And I catch but the echo of these sad words,
Which turn to December the blossomy May —
 Dead to-day.

In the room upstairs,
Where the blinds are shut and the odorous airs
May enter not, is lying one —
The fairest maiden under the sun —
Who hears no song of robin, nor sees
How blossoms cover the apple-trees ;
She knows it not, nor ever will know
 Whether it be December or May ;

Whether the roses of Summer blow,
Or the storms of Winter darken the day,
As white is she as the shroud she wears,
In the room upstairs.

There she lies,
The light gone out of her glorious eyes,
The hair brushed back from the faultless brow,
Cold as the sculptured marble now :
The small hands crossed on her snowy breast,
And the dainty feet forever at rest.
What more? What change is this
That turns my love to senseless clay?
Her lips give back no answering kiss,
Yet they were warm but yesterday.
With folded hands and sightless eyes
There she lies.

One year ago,
When the blossoms of May were ready to blow,
We sat and talked of the coming days ;
Talked of the future, whose radiant ways,
Stretching before us, were lost in a mist
Of gold and amber and amethyst.
Then was the world like a rosy dream,
And the dregs were drowned in the cup of bliss ;
All things were, and nothing did seem —
How could we know or guess of this
When the blossoms of May were ready to blow,
One year ago?

What of the years,
With all their strivings, doubts and fears,
That lie before me? Shall I find
Respite in the realm of mind?
Or ever feel again the thrill
Of hot desire burning still?
Will ever ambition rise up as of old,
Warming the blood that flows in my veins?
Shall I find in life's dross a tincture of gold,
Lamenting its losses and hoarding its gains?
Must laughter forever give place to tears —
What of the years?

Dead to-day.
Is there nothing left but this lifeless clay,
Beautiful still in Death's embrace?
Nothing but this? The chiselled face,
And the folded hands on the snowy breast,
And the dainty feet forever at rest?
Go look at her there, as she lies alone,
With cold, cold lips, and white hands crossed;
Go look, and ask if Faith can atone
For the priceless treasure I have lost.
Talk not of Faith to me, I pray —
Dead to-day.

THE UNKNOWN SINGER.

UNKNOWN is the name of the singer who sang
These tender and soulful strains ;
What sorrow was his, what bitter pang,
What heartaches and hidden pains —
Of these no record remains.

And yet, if this poem be all that he left,
He surely lived not in vain,
For to those who are stricken, to those bereft,
These words through the clouds of pain
Will shine like the sun through the rain !

He won not the coveted bauble of fame,
He died unhonored, unknown ;
Yet deep in his breast must have burned the flame
Of dire despair, as is shown
In his verses' grief-burdened tone. '

Ah, well, but his song will awaken a chord
Responsive in many a heart,
And if, while living, men failed to applaud
The unknown singer's art,
They find in death his truer part.

For he must have suffered who sang so sweet,
And each heart that has suffered alone
Will find in his verse a responsive beat —
Wherefore, though his name be unknown,
Our poet is immortal grown !

AWAITING THE END.

NEVER again to know
Health's warming, radiant glow ;
Never again to feel the pulse's quickened beat,
The sinews pliant as steel, tempered in action's heat,
The sweat of honest toil, bringing its respite sweet ;
But day and night, night and day,
To mark the body's slow decay,
And know that Death scores one in the game
(In sunshine and shadow all the same),
Every day, every day !

Never again to dream
Of all that may be, or seem,
In the sunlit future hid from the eager eyes of youth ;
Never to raise the lid of the precious casket of truth ;
Never to hope to delve in the field of thought, forsooth ;
But day and night, night and day,
To watch the hours waste away,
Still in the world and still not of it —
Still learning more and more to love it,
Every day, every day !

Never again to stand
In the thick of the battle grand —
In the God-led battle of life, the goodliest battle of all,
Where noble it were in the strife, manfully fighting,
to fall ;
Never in action's ranks to answer the bugle-call —
But day and night, night and day,
To passively sit and watch the fray,
With a skeleton spectre always nigh —
Oh, worse than a thousand times to die
Every day, every day !

OLE BULL.

NOW, yeoman and patrician,
Weep for the great magician,
Whose clay-freed spirit hears
The music of those spheres
Which ever he dreamed of in earthly years—
Weep, for he 's dead and worthy of your tears !

What melodies have died with him,
What million eyes have cried with him,
What million hearts have sighed with him,
Moved by the rare magician —
By the more than mere musician —
By the poet whose soul found speech
In the melodies seraphim teach !
Ah, passing our mortal reach
Was the scope of his God-lit fire !
Its flame leaped high and higher,
Till it soared in the realms which inspire
All noble thought, all deeds heroic ;
And the world was better because he lived in it ;
His genius made him no churlish stoic ;

In the woof of Life, while 't was his to spin it,
He wove Love's golden thread —
Alack that the woof is torn to a shred,
Alack that our good old friend is dead !

Through wonderful realms he led us,
On the nectar of sound he fed us,
Till a subtile charm o'erspread us,
And we grew half drunk with melody,
Half drunk with a rapture of ecstasy,
And the soul of the violin,
As it poured itself out, became
Now the wail of the lost in sin,
Now the trumpet-blare of fame ;
It raged, it howled, it moaned,
It cried, it shrieked, it groaned ;
Then lo ! by a single wave
Of the wand of the rare enchanter,
It turned from accents grave
To the sharp, quick beat of a canter,
And in place of solemn sounds it gave
The veriest, merriest banter.
It laughed the silvery laugh of a child,
It gurgled like brooks in forests wild,
It spoke Love's language undefiled,
And cooed and sang like wanton birds
In speech too dainty for spoken words.
And its notes, like some celestial balm,
Threw o'er the soul a restful calm,

Till it seemed that all life's intricate riddle
Was solved at last by the master's fiddle !

Let his violin evermore rest
 Insensate and dumb,
For its notes would be wailings at best,
 Till another shall come
The equal of him who so cherished and loved it —
Aye, let it be dumb, for the soul that once moved it,
 That moved it to joy, or to sorrow's sharp stings,
 Would wail through the strings,
 And a sound, as of wings,
A sad, rustling sound, would hover around
 Its dismal, discordant mutterings !

If never the bleak Norwegian coast
 Shall give us more,
Let this, then, be its future boast :
 That from its shore
Came he for whom the yeoman and patrician
 Wept when he died —
Wept for the great magician, wept for the rare musician,
 And the man, beside !

THE WORLD STILL GOOD.

I THOUGHT me in the Winter drear,
When Death's grim form above me bent :
Ah, let me live till Spring is here,
And I will die content !

But when the flowers bloomed, and when
A balmy fragrance filled the air,
I prayed that I might once again
Behold the Summer fair.

The Summer waned. Then best of all
The Autumn seemed, with hazy sky ;
Oh, let me live till red leaves fall —
'T were fittest then to die !

About me now the withered leaves
Are blown by chill November's breath ;
Yet still the soul within me clings
To earth, and shrinks from death.

So, whether in the Winter drear,
Or under Summer's softer sky,
The world still seems too dear, too dear,
To make it good to die !

MY BOYHOOD'S HOME.

I THREAD again the old, familiar ways,
Where once, a child, I trod long years ago ;
I may not count the many weary days
Which since have passed, nor do I care to know
The changes Time hath wrought. Enough to find
That all is here, as pictured in my mind.

The house, low-gabled, with its overhanging eaves,
The babbling brook, still running at my feet,
The elms and maples, with their whispering leaves,
The odor from the pastures fresh and sweet —
All these are here, and, looking at them now,
I find no trace of age on Nature's brow.

Beneath this well-remembered oak I stand,
And lo ! the years turn back. The weary man
Is once again the boy, who dreamed and planned
When every dream was golden, every plan
Heroic, noble, possible and fair,
And thoughts themselves were castles in the air.

How pleasant then the world ! How bright and good !

How sweet the morrow, how complete the day !

I quaffed the cup of joy, nor understood

How cruel Fate might snatch the cup away ;

The trees, the fields, the babbling brook that blends

Its music with the birds' — these were my friends.

They are not changed. They know me even now,

And greet me with a welcome warm and true ;

The fresh-lipped boy and man with furrowed brow

Are one to them — the one they loved and knew

Long years ago, before his heart had grown

As dead and heavy as a thing of stone.

From crowded cities, reeking in their sin,

I come again to this my early shrine :

The door stands open, and I enter in

Where all is pure and gracious and divine ;

And, comforted by memory's mighty spell,

I say : “ This is the spot where God did dwell ! ”

OVER THE RUINS.

TEARS for the dead whose bodies lent
Fuel for Death's grim sacrament.

Here is the spot where the ruins black,
Smoulder and smoke in a steaming stack,
Scorched, and singed, and baked, and charred —
Here was the playhouse, evil-starred.

This was the stage, and there was the pit,
And the gallery there — God pity it ! —
And here in the centre, buried deep,
Under this blackened, smoking heap,
Are human bodies — none may know
How many there are lying low —
Bodies crisp, begrimed and charred,
With limbs distorted, faces marred,
Burned in the playhouse, evil-starred.

Not one of those who came to see
The actors mimic grief portray,
Could guess how stern a tragedy
Would end the sorrow-burdened play.

And who shall tell their terrible fate?

The hungry flames, like a hungry fiend,
Hissed, and roared, and greedily ate

The flesh from the bones of those who screened,
From the stifling smoke and horrible heat,

Their blinded eyes, with arms upraised —
Then died in their agony. Who shall repeat

The torture of those who, stricken and dazed,
Fell, crushed and mangled under the feet
Of the surging, struggling, maddened mass,
Fighting its way through the narrow pass?

Ah, what a fearful struggle was that

Which the fierce, hot love of life begat !

A struggle for self, a battle for breath,

In the face of a torturous, fiery death.

What shrieks of anguish rent the air ;

What moans and groans of grim despair ;

What desperation and despair,

Was pictured in that awful glare !

And here are the bodies, blackened and charred,

Friends and fathers, wives and mothers,

Husbands, children, sisters, brothers,

Limbs distorted, faces marred,

Burned in the playhouse, evil-starred.

Tears for the dead whose bodies lent

Fuel for Death's grim sacrament.

Theirs was the agony, bitter and brief,

Ours the heartache and lingering grief.

Tears for the homes that are stricken to-day,
Mourning the loved ones snatched away,
Mourning the lost who shall come no more ;
Tears for the hearts that are bleeding and sore ;
Tears for the living not less than the dead —
The living who will not be comforted ;
Who weep over bodies blackened and charred,
Burned in the playhouse, evil-starred.

THE BOY THAT I KNEW.

AMONG the people I've chanced to know,
In the course of my varied career,
Was a certain youngster who, years ago,
I held exceedingly dear ;
A rollicking, blue-eyed, mischievous lad—
Not painfully good nor shockingly bad,
'Though a trifle precocious, I fear.

He was wise in the larger wisdom that comes
While the fingers still number one's years ;
He was staggered by none of life's hard sums,
Dismayed by none of its fears.
The future that stretched away at his feet
Was full of promise and tempting and sweet,
And free from the gall of tears.

And wonderful things he intended to do —
This boy whom I used to know ;
For fame he would win, and a fortune, too,
When to man's estate he should grow.
He would help the poor, lift up the oppressed,
And cause his name by the world to be blessed,
As he told me, with cheeks aglow.

And then, in good time, he would woo and wed
A maiden bewitchingly fair,
With eyes like the night and lips ruby red,
And coils of raven-black hair ;
And she should be always and ever his queen —
The prettiest girl that the world has seen —
His joys and his triumphs to share.

Ah, well for that youngster of other days,
And well for his golden plans ;
If he failed to tread in the dreamed-of ways,
Call the fault not the boy's, but the man's ;
If the world, as he found it, was not the same
As that which he dreamed would bring honor and fame,
'T was the world which youth ever scans !

They tell me he still is alive — the boy
Whom I knew in the years long fled —
And I would not their simple faith destroy,
Though, in truth, I know he is dead !
He died when the freshness of faith went out
In disappointment and sorrow and doubt,
And the man was born instead !

Yes, he died forever, the laughing lad,
When the bitter lesson he learned
That the world grows bleak and the soul grows sad,
Whatever the hopes that have burned.

He died, and the trustful, happy youth,
Who jumped at the stars and guessed at the truth,
To the doubting cynic was turned !

I know that the world declares to-day
That I am that youngster of old —
That the man is the boy grown bearded and gray —
But the world has been wrongfully told !
For Time he killed the gentle youth —
With the sharp, keen blade of naked Truth —
And left him stark and cold !

NOTHING UNDER THE SUN IS NEW.

NOTHING under the sun is new —
The old was old in Solomon's day,
The false was false and the true was true,
As the false and true will be alway.

The Pharisee walks in the public place
With his broad phylacteries displayed,
And makes the prayers with a solemn face
That a thousand years ago he made.

The Priest and the Levite still pass by,
While the wounded wretch, on the other side,
Appeals in vain with beseeching eye
For the helping hand so coldly denied.

Now Lazarus begs at Dives' gate
For the crumbs that fall from his ample feast ;
And never a fear of his future fate
Disturbs the rich man's soul in the least.

And Magdalen crouches in dumb despair,
 Alone at the foot of the altar-stone,
 And nobody heeds her lying there,
 Or hears her prayer in its anguished moan.

So nothing under the sun is new —
 The old was old in Solomon's day —
 But where are the workers, faithful and true,
 Who lifted the fallen along the way?

Will the good Samaritan come no more?
 Is the strength of the chosen weak and cold?
 Are faith and hope and charity o'er?
 Is it only love that dies when old?

Nay, love survives, and brave souls live,
 And generous deeds are done by the few,
 While the many accept what the martyrs give,
 And — nothing under the sun is new !

THE LOVE THAT WAS.

LOVE must die, or good or bad,
But, oh, let it make us glad
That we have, or that we had !

Flying high, or flying low,
Love is Fancy, don't you know?
A fancy only born to go.

Now 't is over. Hide with leaves
Love in dark November eves,
While his shroud pale Winter weaves.

May no darksome thread of sin
Ever there be woven in,
Brightly clothe the Love that's been.

He was Eros, lord of dream —
Cupid shooting starry beam —
Wine of hearts he made them seem !

Alas ! his going left us sad,
But still this thought shall make us glad —
That once, at least, true Love we had.

MY LAST LOVE.

I HAVE loved a score of loves,
Maidens dark and maidens fair,
Maidens soft as snow-white doves,
Maidens crowned with sunlit hair,
Maidens low and maidens high —
All at times I've loved, have I,
But I never loved before
Such a maid as this who's come
From the silent, unseen shore,
Cold and passionless and dumb.

Oh, her lips are icy cold,
And her brow is lily white,
And when my form she doth enfold,
All within the starless night,
Sometimes I do shiver, though
Resting on a breast of snow !
Sometimes I do quake with fear
At my love so strange, so still ;
And I tremble to draw near
The maid whose very breath is chill.

Strange, this maid, perhaps you 'll say —

A cruel, heartless, cold coquette —

The thousand loves she has to-day

Before to-morrow she 'll forget !

But other thousands will have come —

White-lipped and passionless and dumb —

And these, with all her siren grace,

Forevermore her charm will hold ;

She 'll clasp them in her chill embrace,

And kiss them with her lips ice-cold !

And who is she, this maiden rare,

Who chills her lovers with her breath?

What is the name that she doth bear?

A simple name indeed — 't is Death !

Aye, I have loved of loves a score,

But only Death shall I love more ;

For though her kiss be icy cold,

And though I sometimes grow afraid,

Yet well I know that bliss untold

Awaits my nuptials with the maid !

THE POOR POET'S SCRAP-BOOK.

AND this only is left ! Cold comfort, these fancies,
To creditors crowding about with their bills ;
If the butcher took verses, the baker romances,
To settle their claims, 't would have lessened his ills.

Yet he cherished these scraps, and tenderly, knowing,
In spite of their faults, he fathered them all ;
Well it became him, such charity showing
To children so weak and puny and small.

Their life, like his own, was the vagabond's always ;
Like him, they discovered true friends to be rare ;
Now hiding in attics, now lurking in hallways,
Nor songs nor singer earth's blessings could share.

And yet, if they never have known the glories
Of gilded bindings and library shelves,
Perhaps they have carried their simple stories
To some who welcomed them for themselves.

If somewhere, at some time, the eyes of a maiden
Have brightened because of this sonnet on love ;
If somebody's heart with grief heavy-laden
Has comforted been by the stanzas above ;

If the marvellous riches which truth inherits
Are made to appear more worthy of gain —
Then, spite of their weakness, their many demerits,
These scraps, let us say, were not written in vain.

While to him, the poor poet, whose spark of God's fire
Went out in these lines, in the battle for bread,
What matters it now? Is there any round higher
Than that which he stepped to last night from his bed ?

THE BABY'S PICTURE.

THE smile upon the baby's face
Here in the picture lingers,
And close about the entwining lace
Are clasped his chubby fingers.
'T was thus he sat with laughing eyes,
In momentary wonder,
His long white dress drawn partly up,
His pink toes peeping under.

You should have heard his merry crow,
This cunningest of creatures,
When first the baby came to know
His pretty pictured features.
He gazed upon the face full oft,
His eyes responsive beaming,
As if, indeed, the picture shared
The day-dreams he was dreaming.

His life appeared so full of joy,
The sunshine of its morning,
When sickness touched our baby-boy,
We hardly felt its warning.
We could not hear the distant voice
In awful summons calling ;

We could not see the shades of Death
About our pathway falling.

But all too soon the knowledge came
That his brief life was ending ;
That o'er his little trundle-bed
An angel form was bending
To convoy him to that strange land,
So near despite its distance,
Where he should solve the mystery
That shrouds the soul's existence.

And when that dreaded hour had come,
When faith was sorely tested,
The little sufferer stretched his hand
To where his picture rested ;
And when we held it up to him,
In accents sweet and mellow
He said, repeating what he 'd heard :
" Good-bye ! poor little fellow ! "

And that is all. We bow in grief
To Heaven's mysterious warning,
But half the sunshine of our lives
Went out in that gray morning.
And so we prize this pictured face
Where baby's smile still lingers,
And where, about the entwining lace,
Are clasped the chubby fingers.

IN EXTREMIS.

THIS hand is as steady
As when, in the old days,
It plucked the already
Ripe fruit from Life's tree —
The apples that weighted the boughs in the gold days,
When blazed the great sun of promise for me.

Yes, perfectly steady,
With no trace of trembling,
Though all is now ready,
This dainty glass here :
Pray, observe, there is nothing remotely resembling
The outward expression of commonplace fear.

Yet I stand on the threshold
Of the realmless Hereafter,
Too late to take fresh hold
On hope or on life ;
Never more on my ear shall sound the glad laughter
Of children, still eager and hot for the strife.

For here, in this wine-glass —
This colorless liquor —
This rare, this divine glass,
The power I 've caught
To send the soul on to its destiny quicker
Than speeds the intangible essence of thought !

And see, now, how steady
The glass is uplifted !
'T is drained ! And already
I 'm gasping for breath —
Out on the icy, black waters I 've drifted —
Out on the fathomless ocean called death !

A NOVEMBER REVERIE.

I CARE not for your Spring-time fancies —
For bursting buds or opening leaves ;
Give me the wild, weird necromancies
Which Autumn, rare magician, weaves !
The bowl and pipe and glowing ember —
The genial soul of bleak November —
To these alone my spirit cleaves !

What recks it if the wind goes prowling
In and out among the trees ?
My fancy turns its dismal howling
Into sweetest melodies.
And while the fire blazes redly,
I listen to the storm-king's medley,
In lotus-like and dreamful ease.

Drawn closely is each crimson curtain,
The argand-lamp burns dim and low :
While shadows, ghostly and uncertain,
Like phantoms flicker to and fro.
Ah, night of nights on which to ponder
Upon the past, to dream and wonder —
And, dreaming, live the long-ago !

I hear the old, familiar voices
That thrilled my soul in other days,
And once again my soul rejoices
At Love's soft-spoken words of praise.
Again the sky, with all the olden
Flush of promise, glimmers golden
Before my eager, dazzled gaze.

Again the future lies before me,
Outstretching into fairy-lands,
While Youth's fair genii hover o'er me,
And Time runs on in burnished sands.
Again I trust the old magician —
Again I dream of dead ambition —
Aladdin's lamp is in my hands !

What if my hopes have turned to ashes?
What if the years have brought, instead
Of apples, only calabashes —
And thorns in place of roses red?
I would not ask to live it over —
No — both on thistle and on clover
In life's long journey we must tread.

And if my path has sometimes wended
Through places treacherous to the feet,
Still, take the good and evil blended,
The whole seems rounded and complete.

Yes, looking back upon my measure
Of earthly pain and earthly pleasure,
And I can say that life was sweet.

And so to-night I sit here dreaming
Of what has come in all these years,
While in the lamplight's mellow gleaming
Full many a vanished form appears.
I live again the old romances,
And, lo, from Time's forgotten fancies
I catch the laugh without the tears !

THE TWO WISHERS.

OUT in the street, this Winter's day,
A brawny man is shovelling snow ;
Steadily there he works away
With muscular arms and face aglow,
Glad to earn a pittance for pay, —
Shovelling off the snow.

Unto eyes that can only see
The tangible outward, here is one
Who suffers the stings of poverty,
Who wearily drudges from sun to sun,
Whose shackled hours are never free,
Whose work is never done.

For ragged he is, and scantily clad,
And one would be willing to hazard the guess
That meat and bread are not to be had
By him and his in plenteousness ;
For all his life he has shovelled through
The drifts of want and distress.

Yet a keener vision might detect
Some priceless things which belong to him :
Muscles of iron, a form erect,
An eye that is never glazed or dim ;
And the rich, hot blood of perfect health,
Coursing through body and limb.

Now, across the street from the shoveller stands
A stately mansion built of stone ;
And there, in the window, with folded hands,
A pale-faced man looks out alone, —
Looks out at the laborer over the way,
At the snow his shovel has thrown.

Exotic plants in the window bloom,
Shut in by curtains of finest lace,
And scattered about the spacious room
Are all things which befit the place ;
A poor man might subsist a year
On the cost of that Sèvres vase.

Resting a moment, the shoveller sees
The face in the window across the street,
And he thinks : “ Could I live like that, at my ease,
With nothing to do, and plenty to eat,
With money and servants and all at command,
Then, surely, would life be sweet ! ”

And he wearily sighs as he turns again
To the work unfinished that waits his hands ;
But his sigh is echoed in sharper pain
By him who has called it forth, who stands
Watching the laborer, while he thinks :
“ Houses and money and lands —

“ All that I have of power or wealth —
I would freely give if I could but know
The rarer riches of strength and health ;
Yes, all on the laborer there I 'd bestow,
If I, like him, could go out in the street,
And shovel off the snow ! ”

IN GREENWOOD.

I SCENT the flowers' perfumed breath,
Here in the still abode of Death.
The velvet turf beneath my feet
Is deeply green and freshly sweet.
The swaying branches overhead
Shut in a city of the dead —
A city where no clamorous din,
Nor strife nor tumult enters in.

Proudly rise on either hand
The monuments austere and grand ;
Polished shaft and massive base,
Sculptured bust and chiselled vase,
Marble urn and granite tomb,
Whereon the rarest flowers bloom,
As if they sought, by pomp and pride,
The ghastliness of Death to hide !

Past the sepulchred display,
To one lone grave I wend my way.
No marble column here is found —
No lordly shaft to mark the mound.

And yet I know the tears I shed
Are richer tributes to my dead
Than any stone by sculptor prized —
For tears are Love's griefs crystallized !

SONNET ON EDWIN ADAMS.

TO-DAY Melpomene looks down and sighs
In honest grief, which wrings her maiden heart,
And fair Thalia, with her laughing eyes
All wet with tears, forgets her merry part ;
He wooed them both, and won from both the prize
Of fame, which purifies and betters art.
So let them weep because their lover lies
Immovable and cold in Death's embrace.
But what is art, or fame, or honor won
To us, who gaze upon his wasted face,
And, gazing, weep, and, weeping, think upon
The nobleness and all the tender grace
That died with him? O Death, thy sting is sore !
He honored Art, but honored manhood more !

A CIRCUS MEMORY.

I WENT to the circus the other day
With this youngster here — he is six years old —
And we 're royal friends, though my head is gray,
While his, you observe, is the color of gold.

You ought to have seen the look of surprise
(Alas, that surprise should wither and fade !)
That brightened and gladdened and moistened his eyes,
When appeared the bespangled, antique cavalcade.

'Twas the same old performance you saw in your
youth —
Every movement familiar through thirty long years —
But to watch my boy's pleasure would move you, in truth,
To a laugh that would help you to stifle your tears.

And, somehow, my fancies went wandering by
Into realms half-forgotten, as fancies will flow,
To the day when my brother (poor Johnny) and I,
With a shilling between us, set out for the show.

We knew when we started that one must stay out
While the other went in, and we tossed up a cent —
One agonized moment of longing and doubt,
And it fell in his favor — I stayed, and he went.

For two mortal hours, with never a pause,
I stood by the tent and tried hard not to cry ;
I followed the music and heard the applause,
Half angry, half happy. Ah, well, was that I?

Was it I who waited my brother's return,
And found in his eyes a warm, pitying glow,
When he said : " Never mind, the next shilling we earn
Shall be yours, every cent, till you go to a show ! "

This golden-haired youngster has brought it all back —
A picture of sunshine and sympathy blent ;
The love of two brothers ; a background of black ;
For his summons came early, — I stayed and he went.

The circus, I take it, is always the same,
But only the vision of boyhood can see
Its marvellous wonders, which put to the shame
The dull comprehension of graybeards like me.

My little companion revives an old pain
By his innocent pleasure, his happy surprise.
Come here, you young rascal ! I'll take you again.
Heigh-ho ! What is this ? There are tears in his eyes !

EDELWEISS.

ON cragged, bleak high tops
Of the Alps,
Glistening like huge Cyclops'
Bald scalps,
Swept by the breezes blasting,
Under ice,
Blooms a flower everlasting —
The edelweiss.

When to maid the Swedish lover
Fain would show
How much he thinketh of her,
He doth go
Up the summits, breathless,
Capped with ice,
To gather there the deathless
Edelweiss.

Oft his foothold misses,
And he 's thrown
Down the deep abysses,
Like a stone ;

They find him, some day, clasping
A shroud of ice —
His dead, cold fingers grasping
The edelweiss !

But the lover who thus giveth
Life for love,
In the maiden's bosom liveth,
Part thereof !
On all her future casting
Love's device —
A flower as everlasting
As edelweiss !

THE SPARROW.

IN suits of English brown,
The sparrows of the town
Accept their daily bills of fare with well-contented faces ;
Blest dwellers in the city,
They chirp a sigh of pity
For luckless birds whose lots are cast in lonesome
country places.

Bohemians are they,
Who, happy for the day,
Have never learned to vex themselves by thinking of
the morrow ;
They take the fate that comes,
Along with all the crumbs,
And their conscience does not trouble them to beg or
steal or borrow.

At early morn and dark,
From the Battery to the Park,
In crowded street and avenue you see them, self-
reliant,
Now hopping here and there,
Now standing still to stare,
So prettily pugnacious and so jauntily defiant.

Without a task or master,
They live as fast, or faster
Than any slinger of the pen, or scissorer and sticker ;
They neither sow nor reap,
No prudish laws they keep,
But freely make of tansy-dew their matutinal liquor.

Although their life is short,
'T is all a time of sport,
With plenty of excitement and exhilaration in it ;
Unlike the cooing dove,
When the sparrow falls in love
He woos and weds and gets divorced, and all within a
minute.

A useless bird, they say,
But these objectors may,
While costing more, be less themselves in genuine
utility.

The sparrow eats his worms,
And stays through winter's storms
As Nature's cheerful evidence of brave, fecund facility.

Methinks in chirpy speech
These feathered vagrants preach
A sermon every day to us whose faith is weak and
narrow.

So wisely we may turn
To them if we would learn
To put our trust in Him who marks the fall of every
sparrow.

THE BLACKSMITH KING.

UNDER the brow of the hill, over there,
Dwells a king, — a king who's my neighbor ;
For subjects he has three children fair
And a sweet little wife, with bonny brown hair,
And his realm is the wonderful realm of labor.

You may hear the strokes of his hammer ring
(For a hammer's the sceptre of this rare king),
While his throne is the forge, where, all the day,
Humming a tune, he works away.

Clang ! clang ! The hammer falls,
And the sparks fly up to the dusky walls,
And the bellows blow and the anvil rings,
While honest labor its blessing brings, —
A blessing before unknown to kings !

Clang ! clang ! In the hammer's stroke
Re-echoes the music of long-gone ages :
'Tis the iron-throated song that broke
On the world when Tubal Cain first woke
Metallic melodies, heard by the sages !

Clang ! clang ! It is muscle that sings !
Clang ! clang ! Nor tyrants nor kings
Can feel the pride of my honest neighbor,
Who glories to know that his every blow
Is a note in the world-old anthem of labor !

And so has he fashioned his humble life
As he fashions the iron, with brawny blows ;
Out of the fire of hatred and strife
His nature into harmony grows,
Still softened by love, by labor made strong,
Loving the right and hating the wrong,
As happy as ever the day is long —
Who dare speak of the curse of labor,
Beholding the king over there, my neighbor?

Sweet is the sweat of honest toil,
And sweet is the rest that follows after ;
No weary burner of midnight oil,
No bacchanal, 'mid wine and laughter,
Yet did know or even can
The pleasures possible to man.

Possible to him who learns
The lesson taught by honest labor ;
Who eats with zest the bread he earns,
While in his soul no envy burns
Though he be poorer than his neighbor.

The scholar wins, perchance, a name ;
The poet may clutch the bubble fame ;
The warrior hear the loud huzzah ;
The savant find an unknown star ;
But when the end, at last, has come,
When warrior sleeps and poet is dumb,
What matters then? Where lies the gain
For all the heartache and the pain,
The striving, yearning, sweat of brain.

Is he not happier who can say
(As can the blacksmith over the way),
“ Few talents unto me were lent,
But in their stead God gave content ! ”

DEAD YESTERDAY.

IN the dim valley of perpetual Peace,
Where bloom unfading all the flowers of May,
Where bright birds sing sweet songs that never cease,
I sit beside the grave of Yesterday.

It came and went, and is not any more ;
But with its going sped the light of hope,
And left me lonesome, wandering on Life's shore,
Amid the wrecks where mortals blindly grope.

To have again the pleasures that are gone,
To tread the path of innocence and youth,
Its noontide flush, the glory of its dawn,
To gain the past, were Heaven's own joy in truth.

What shall survive when dust is turned to dust,
And man surrenders his poor, fleeting breath —
What save sweet Memory shall resist the rust
Of Time's corroding tooth — the sting of Death !

If this be immortality, I sing
Its praise and wait contented as I may
For that most welcome future which shall bring
The resurrection of dead Yesterday.

OCTOBER.

RARE month of October,
Thy robes, russet-sober,
Are thrown over earth like a mantle with fringing
Of crimson and gold ;
All fair to behold
Are the many bright hues of the deep colors tingeing
The leaves dropping down —
Some are red, some are brown,
Some are dashed with vermillion, and some with burnt
umber,
And all in their glory they fall without number.

Ah, better than Summer
Is this latest comer,
This month in the Autumn, delightful and golden ;
For earth is now mellow,
And sunshine is yellow,
And blood in the veins like wine is that 's olden !
A matron thou art,
October, whose heart
Is riper in love than any green maiden —
Than May, with her blushes and buds overladen.

Oh, month of rare splendor,
Red-hearted and tender,
With what a new glory the world you have flooded !
Enraptured I stand
Looking forth on a land
Where color runs riot and forest is studded
With all the bright hues
Which prisms diffuse ;
Afar in the distance the robin is calling,
While silently round me the red leaves are falling.

Ah, month of October,
Why grows my heart sober
When Earth is thus clad in a raiment of glory ?
Thy gaudy-hued splendor,
Thy days sweet and tender,
Alas, they bring back to my mind the old story :
How soon shall the red leaves
Turn into dead leaves ?
And all the fond hopes which I cling to and cherish —
How soon, like these leaves, shall they wither and
perish ?

WHY DO THE WRINKLES COME ?

LITTLE Bo Peep climbs on to my knee —
Little Bo Beep is four years old.
And what her bright, blue eyes don't see
Would need a microscope to behold.

She pulls my beard — that's one of her tasks ;
She pokes my cheek with her little fat thumb,
Then, gazing straight in my face, she asks :
“ What is it that makes the wrinkles come ? ”

Ah, little Bo Peep, you cannot guess
How hard is the question you thus propound ;
It calls for greater wisdom (or less)
Than ever philosopher yet has found.

There was a time, my little Bo Peep,
When my face was as smooth as yours is now,
When never a line nor wrinkle deep
Had left its imprint on my brow.

A time when I woke from balmy sleep
To find life always a glad surprise ;
When I laughed as you laugh, my little Bo Peep,
And looked on the world with the same big eyes.

Ah, well, I laughed and loved and grew old,
Working away at life's hard sum,
And half was dross that I dreamed was gold —
And so the wrinkles began to come.

Yes, that is the way, my little Bo Peep —
As near as I can tell you now —
That is the way the furrows deep,
One by one, crept over my brow.

When I saw the glad, bright dreams of youth,
Like the roses of Summer, wither away ;
When I learned how the fragrant flower of Truth
By the thistles of Falsehood was strangled one day ;

When the faith I placed in man was returned
By man's ingratitude, blacker than night ;
When the hard and bitter truth had been learned
That might, in this world, too often makes right ;

When I saw the good borne down and oppressed,
The wicked triumphant in their shame,
The Samaritan scorned and the Pharisee blessed —
Then, little Bo Peep, the wrinkles came !

But may you in the sunshine forever bask,
So that, when the years shall have made you gray,
Some future Bo Peep, gazing at you, shall ask :
What is it that keeps the wrinkles away ?

CITY VIOLETS.

IN the heart of the turbulent city,
Through the din and the dust and the heat,
I come to the flower-girl, selling
Her wares on the curb of the street.

Red roses and velvet-leaved pansies,
With the modest, blue violets —
A flower as fresh and as fragrant
As the memories which it begets.

Take the roses that blush in their beauty,
Take the pansies of royal hue ;
But leave me the violets dainty,
The violets modest and blue.

For they hint of the breezy country,
Of meadow and woodland and field ;
And, like balm to my weary spirit,
Is the perfume which they yield.

Unused to the riotous city,
I fancy they open their eyes
At the din and the roar and the racket,
Filled with a strange surprise.

Ah, well, for those days unforgotten,
When I gathered such flowers as these,
When I wandered through woodland meadow,
A friend of the birds and the trees !

Ah, well, for the hopes I have buried,
For the longings and vain regrets,
For the buds of promise withered,
Since I gathered violets !

I knew them in days that have left me,
In days that were trustful and true,
When life, like the violet dainty,
Was colored with heaven's own hue.

So here, in the heart of the city,
Where want with affluence blends,
These modest flowers greet me
Like well-remembered friends.

Your pansies are gaudily splendid,
But I like not their purple and gold ;
Your roses, red-hearted, remind me
Of beauties too brazenly bold.

But all that is pure and modest
Is found in the violet sweet ;
Like a maiden whose lips are virgin,
Dainty, demure and complete.

Then give me the violets modest,
The violets modest and true,
For the Past is embalmed in their fragrance,
And heaven beams out of their blue.

THANKSGIVING REFLECTIONS.

FOR what shall we offer thanks, my wife,
For what have *we* to be grateful to-day?
What blessings have come to brighten *our* life,
In the year that has wearily rolled away?
I see you standing there, worn and weak,
But where are the roses that crimsoned your cheek
In the happier days gone by?
Your soft, sweet voice still falls on my ear,
But where is the laugh I was wont to hear,
Whenever my darling was nigh?

Have honors come, or riches, or fame,
Or any gifts from the gods above?
Shall we feast on fish and flesh and game,
And drink of rare old wines, my love?
Ah, well, but sorrowful guests are they
Who have come to dine with us this day,
To revel on bread and cheese!
For Poverty, Sickness, Want and Woe,
There they sit in a ghastly row,
And we must be thankful for these!

Be thankful ! I gaze across the street,
To the lordly mansion where Croesus lives ;
How good is the world to him — how sweet —
How unctuous the thanks he always gives !
In his carriage he drives to church to-day,
On velvet cushions to kneel and pray
For the blessings Heaven bestows ;
O God, how easy it were to kneel
When one has never been called to feel
The sting of misfortune's blows !

And why unto him should be given all,
While there is nothing for me or mine ?
Why should *I* drink life's bitter gall,
While *he* sips only its sparkling wine ?
Be thankful ! And here in anguish I lie,
With Death's grim shadow hovering nigh,
And hope forever gone out —
Helpless and wretched, with naught in life
But you, my brave, little, noble wife —
Lost in the sea of doubt !

Ah, easy to say that the Lord is good,
While we bask in the rays of prosperity's sun ;
Easy to voice our gratitude,
When the crown is ours, the victory won.
But, ah, in the face of want and despair,
How shall we bend the knee in prayer,
Or find the heart to pray ?

How can we offer thanks, when life
Is nothing but wretchedness, woe and strife,
That mock this festive day?

And yet, and yet, it may be, my love,
Despite the shadows which darken our way,
That the will of Him who ruleth above
Is working for us on this Thanksgiving day.
'T is true that we may not, like Cræsus, dine
On the richest viands, the rarest wine,
But for that we never will sigh ;
For we will drink of the wine of love,
And that is something, my darling, my dove,
Which Cræsus never can buy !

A NEW PHILOSOPHER.

I HAVE found a philosopher wiser far
Than all your Huxleys, Humes or Voltaires —
One who has never discovered a star,
Nor mounted metaphysical stairs ;
One who has sought not to sound the deeps
Of science, nor asked wherefore he was born ;
One who, at night, goes to bed and sleeps,
And wakes with a laugh to greet the morn.

This sage philosopher nothing knows
(And less would care if know he could)
Of how the invertebrate mollusk grows —
Enough for him that oysters are good.
He never would try to tell you why
Quinine is bitter and honey is sweet —
'T would all his philosophy satisfy
To leave the drug and the honey eat !

The baby-elephant in the show
Affords him a world of fun while there,
But he would n't give a peanut to know
Why pachydermatous babes are rare !

Nor when the monkeys their antics play
Does the task on him entail to trace,
In their tails prehensile, a relic stray
Of the prehistoric human race.

If you take him to see a funny play,
He 'll find it a pleasure and tell you so,
Instead of remarking that actors to-day
Are nothing to thirty years ago !
His philosophy turns the Present to gold,
It brightens the Morrow, and sweeps away
That herd who in glad To-day grow old,
Bemoaning the husks of Yesterday.

If this rare philosopher could but rule
The world, 't would be of a different type ;
There would be no grief, no pain, no school,
No hopes disappointed, no apples unripe.
All sin and misery, shame and crime,
All envy and malice and evil ways,
Would be blotted out from the page of Time,
And the days would all be circus days !

When the stars peep out in the vaulted skies,
It pleases him well to watch them shine ;
But no mathematics he ever applies
To the handiwork of their Maker divine.
Whether the sun be a million miles,
Or a hundred millions, is all as one —

Enough to dimple his face in smiles
That there is, and will be forever, a sun !

So, I hold him to be both wise and great,
This new philosopher whom I have found,
And when, in conclusion, here I state
That just ten Summers have rolled around
His flaxen head, don't ridicule
A sage whose years are so easy to add :
Much learning hereafter may make him a fool,
But to-day he is wise enough to be glad !

NEW LAMPS FOR THE OLD.

THROUGH the streets of the ancient town
The magician goes wandering down,
Repeating in accents bold —
While the women assemble near,
Half doubting the words they hear —
New lamps ! New lamps for the old !

Through the multitudinous years
The magician lives and appears,
Still working his evils untold ;
And ever his cry is the same
As when to Aladdin's he came :
New lamps ! New lamps for the old !

To the faithful who rested secure
In promise ample and sure,
And whose feet in right paths were controlled,
He comes with the dogmas of doubt,
Till the light of their faith goes out —
New lamps ! New lamps for the old !

The lover whose love was returned
In a flame that so steadily burned
That its warmth was more precious than gold,
Finds the hope of a life swept away
In the changing caprice of a day —
New lamps ! New lamps for the old !

The maiden who laughed in her joy,
To find in Love's gold no alloy,
But a blessedness not to be told,
Is crushed by the horrible truth
That wealth buys power and youth —
New lamps ! New lamps for the old !

Ah, little they know or divine
How the light that they lose shall shine,
Or what genie of wealth it may hold ;
And they listen, in foolish surprise,
To the voice of the wizard who cries :
New lamps ! New lamps for the old !

THE LIGHTHOUSE.

CROWNING the rocks the lighthouse stands,
Desolate, grim, and alone ;
It seems, from this long, low stretch of sands,
Like a giant upon his throne —
A giant carved out of stone :
And there he stands, forevermore,
Hearing the ocean's deafening roar,
Old ocean's monotone.
There he stands when the fierce suns blaze,
And there in the cold, bleak Winter days —
Forever there, a spectral form
Washed by the waves and beat by the storm.

By night and by day
The waters play
About the feet of this giant gray ;
Or the storm-king lashes them till they pour
Their briny spray
Against the rocks with an angry roar.
'T is then, when the tempest rages high,
That over the waves' foam-crested tops
Glimmers afar the one red eye
Of this sullen old Cyclops !

Ah, well for those
Whose duty knows
No higher plane than thus to give
Their days to this dull work — to live
Contented on those barren rocks ;
To see the waves against them hurled ;
To seek no wisdom which unlocks
The mighty mysteries of the world ;
To feel no thrill, no sudden shocks,
At good report or ill ; but day by day
To tread the same restricted way —
The way which knows no turning —
To watch the waves and heavens gray,
And keep the one lamp burning !
Not vain such lives as theirs, I hold ;
For love, which has the power
To turn a prison's bars to gold,
May gild the lighthouse tower !

THE OLD STAGE-HORSE.

WHAT is that lying there out in the street?
Only a stage-horse, dead from the heat ;
While the crowd stares, along comes the dray —
Hustle him in and cart him away !

Better it is that he should be dead,
Than living the burdensome life he led ;
Better go down in the din and the crash,
Than longer to suffer the sting of the lash.

Stiff in the joints and weak in the knees,
Jaded, disabled and filled with disease,
Shorn of his strength and blind in an eye —
What could the old horse do but die ?

Little there was to sweeten his life,
Doomed to the clattering tumult and strife,
To the deafening din and the scorching heat
Of the city's clamorous, crowded street.

Happier days had the old horse known,
Days when a kindlier fortune had thrown
His lot in pleasant and peaceful ways —
Alack, that he ever outlived those days !

Then was he petted and prized for his speed,
Given the best of drink and feed,
Groomed by day and guarded by night,
And decked with a harness polished and bright.

Halcyon times were those for him,
When, glossy of coat and neat of limb,
Proud from his hoof to his small ear's tip,
He felt his power and spurned the whip.

But for the evil days that came
He never had known disgrace or shame ;
His life had been all that comfort denotes,
Passed in the calm of an Eden of oats.

Stripped of his beauty and weakened by age,
Thus at the end was he put to the stage ;
The servant alike of sinner and saint,
He bore his burden without complaint.

Yet sometimes, I fancy, there rose to his eyes
A vision of pastures and country skies ;
The lumbering coach that rolled at his heels
Turned to a buggy with shining wheels.

In place of the dusty, noisy street,
The cool broad highway stretched at his feet,
And again at the brook he stopped to drink —
Ah, well, I forgot — a horse cannot think !

All he could do from day to day,
Was to plod along in his patient way,
Till his very whinny had turned to a sigh,
And then, if he could not think, he could die !

TIME'S TOUCH.

[Read June 25, 1878, on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of "Psi" Charge, in the "Theta Delta Chi" Fraternity, Hamilton College, Clinton, N. Y.]

TEN years ! It hardly counts for much where centuries rise and fade —
Ten little spears of grass cut down by Time's unerring blade ;
Ten grains of sand that go to make the shore of that far sea,
Where freighted ships are sailing to the worlds that are to be.

But in our narrow lives 't were vain to turn with words of scorning
On ten round years, — and those bright years that measured life's fair morning, —
When rose the great sun in the east disclosing roseate views,
And everything was summer-like, — including heavy dews.

Ten years ! Ah yes, 't is long enough, anatomists declare,
To change the body's tissues or the color of the hair,

And looking down upon the seats where once our fellows sat,
'Tis long enough, it seems, to work some stranger change than that.

We like to picture Time as large — his comprehensive plan
Outweighing all the little hopes and purposes of man ;
But what small work is this to which he 's bending as he flies —
This scratching wrinkles in the brows of Theta Delta Chis?

Since first those magic letters were repeated in our ears,
We 've gained the wit and wisdom of a half a score of years,
We 've striven for promotion, and we 've seen our plans miscarried,
We 've thought and wrought and some were caught and safely housed and married.

We 've found misfortune frequently to be a heavy hitter,
And with the sweets of life we 've had our portion of the bitter ;
We 've learned from stern experience the world's un-written ways —
And yet we are not half so wise as in our Freshman days !

Nor can we ever hope to be as sagely wise as then,
When first we came to designate our vealy selves as
men ;
No task on earth, we fondly thought, too great for us
to do,
No page in life's unopened book we could not "pony "
through.

And better for the memory of those undaunted days
Than Fame's loud-throated trumpeting, or any worldly
praise ;
To live within the possible, to find the eyes to see
A rosy future gilding all the sorrow that may be.

To have the lusty courage that is natural to youth,
To delve with honest purpose for the precious ore of
truth ;
To look into the coming years and find sweet promise
there —
Ah, this is good as glorious, and glorious as rare !

The wrinkles come, but youth survives to him whose
heart is young ;
Behind the preacher's grave discourse, the lawyer's
wagging tongue,
The doctor's pills, the merchant's books, your keenest
wits employ,
And you shall find the elements that made the man a
boy.

The Fresh can bear a hat and cane quite undisturbed
to-day ;

The Soph, unawed by upper airs, can thread his hazy
way ;

The Junior, with his budding hopes, who made his
mark at " Ex. ; " ¹

The Senior — all are equal now with none to vaunt or
vex.

And somehow, some on whom we laid the heaviest
sort of odds

That they would climb Olympus' heights and wrestle
with the gods,

Have failed to make the promise good on competition's
floor,

Where " ponies " break their borrowed legs and " bon-
ing " counts for more.

No other wisdom's half so great as youth. It does
not grope,

But leaps to Honor's citadel and storms the gates of
Hope ;

The class-room bounds its cares and toils when life and
health are free,

The world is in the campus then, and honor in K. P. ²

¹ " Ex. " — Junior Rhetorical Exhibition, now abolished.

² " K. P. " — A college abbreviation of Clarke Prize.

But through the various maze of life, whatever path we
tread,

Though thorns shall pierce our weary feet, or flowers
their fragrance shed,

Our thoughts in memory's crucible to purest gold shall
melt,

When on the road we clasp the hand of some true
Theta Delt.

And here to-night we laugh at Time, and for the van-
ished years

We have but pleasant memories and no regretful tears ;
For Time may whiten all our locks and dim the bright-
est eye,

But Time shall never quench our love for Theta Delta
Chi.

TALKING IT OVER.

LUCKY? I should say so ! This is the eleventh,
And all the cards are out for May the twenty-
seventh.

Sixteen days, and then — ah, then — ah, then (don't
twit me),

I hope the tailor cuts that swallow-tail to fit me !

Love her? Well, I don't, speaking quite sincerely ;
But, then, she 'll stand me in twenty thousand yearly ;
And a fellow can't, for any scruples silly,
Afford to let a chance like that escape him, Billy.

Doubtless we shall be moderately happy —
She 's a woman grown, and I 'm not over sappy ;
And we 've both confessed to many early passions,
Which have been outgrown, along with other fashions.

Experience, you know, a woman's nature mellows,
And she has been engaged to half a dozen fellows ;
So the old, old story to her was even older
Than to most who hear it with their heads upon your
shoulder.

Still, she 's well enough — that is, I mean, she 's charming,
And loves me, though her symptoms are not, as yet,
 alarming ;
And remembering her fortune, her bank account, and
 carriage,
I really look with pleasure upon my coming marriage.

But, speaking now of love — perhaps you may remember
The little girl I met in the country last September?
Lord ! what eyes she had — I told you something of
 her,
But I think I did n't tell you that I learned, in fact, to
 love her.

You see, I spent a fortnight in the sleepy, old, romantic
Village where she lives — and that fortnight drove me
 frantic ;
We rowed and drove and fished, and roamed the
 woods together,
And talked — oh, well, of science and butter and the
 weather.

And never once of love? No, never, on my honor —
She may have guessed at that from the way I gazed
 upon her ;
So pure she was, so sweet, with such a freshness to her,
Upon my word, old boy, I felt ashamed to woo her.

Ashamed of vapid talk and all the small devices
Which, in a drawing-room, we offer with the ices ;
Not one of those soft speeches could I find the tongue
to utter,
And so 't was wise, perhaps, to confine myself to butter.

Well, when I came away I held her hand a minute,
And tried to use my voice, but the very deuce was in it.
As dumb as any oyster I stood, and she was dumber,
Until, at last, I told her I would come again next Summer.

Now, what I want to say, should you chance to see her,
Billy,
Just offer my excuses — make 'em sound or make 'em
silly ;
Tell her that I wrote her — that the letter was miscarried —
That I 'm forced to go to Europe — but don't tell her
that I 'm married !

For, honor bright, old boy, though this is the eleventh,
And all the cards are out for May the twenty-seventh,
I half regret I did n't confess I loved her dearly,
And marry her instead of twenty thousand yearly !

OLD SLEDGE.

YOU may eulogize whist as a game which requires
The stolid skill of our English sires ;
You may risk your luck on a draw at poker,
Or patronize euchre — but not with the joker ;
You may find that in cribbage there 's something to do
When you lay out a sequence, or fifteen-two ;
You may build at cassino, or enter a party
For a quiet bout of piquet or écarté —
But there is n't a game in the whole of the pack
That can hold a candle to high-low-jack !

Blest Puritan game ! in the far-away time,
When innocent sport was condemned as a crime,
The boys of New England would hie them away
To a friendly barn with its sheltering hay,
On the afternoon of the Sabbath day,
To digest the sermon and blunt its edge
With thy multitudinous charms, Old Sledge !
They shuffled and dealt with a cautious hand,
For their pasteboard friends were contraband,
But ever and oft, as they made their scores,
They carelessly called the game "all fours."

And afar on the California slope,
In the days when the Argonauts, flushed with hope,
Were searching for "pockets" and staking their claims,
They counted thee then the prince of games.
By the blazing camp-fire gathered round,
What solid comfort in thee they found !
Those bearded men, who carried their lives
Clutched in their hands, as they carried their knives,
Dealt out the cards and brimmed their cup
Of earthly pleasure with seven-up !

With all thy changes of form and name,
At heart, Old Sledge, thou art still the same ;
Thy laws are the laws of life in a way,
Where all must shuffle and deal and play ;
Where the pack is cut by those who would live,
And some must beg and some must give ;
If we hold the high it is safe, we know,
But we need to be cautious with only the low ;
For a knave will carry his point like a brick,
Where a king would fail at taking the trick !

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.

FIFTEEN years ago a very
Pretty girl gave this to me —
A rosebud, which I chose to bury
Between these pages, as you see.
And now, by chance, I've run across it,
Odorless and dry, you know —
I wonder much what color was it
Fifteen years ago?

Fifteen years ago a sappy
Youth, by this same flower, was made
So very — so absurdly happy,
It hushed for once his rodomontade ;
And, gazing at the pretty donor,
His face took on the rose's glow —
The boy was green, upon my honor,
Fifteen years ago !

I well recall that night in Summer —
I think 't was June — perhaps July ;
The rose, at least, was no new-comer,
And hot the day had been, and dry.
But we two, sitting close together,
Of heat or dryness naught could know —
Our love was hotter than the weather
Fifteen years ago !

And who could then have wished it colder,
When once, like mine, his eyes had seen
The rounded arm and dimpled shoulder
Beneath her gauzy grenadine?
My fancies to that moment rove now —
I kissed her once in passion's glow;
The boy was not so green, by Jove! now,
Fifteen years ago!

And this is all that's left — this musty,
Scentless rosebud in a book;
She'd call me now, no doubt, a crusty
Old bachelor — and such I look.
They say she's happy in her marriage,
And with her money makes a show —
She did n't own a Brewster carriage
Fifteen years ago!

They say she's happy. Well, they say it
Of me, likewise, and no one grieves;
Yet Love was mine, and I did slay it!
Its ghost is in these musty leaves.
I close the book. Of course I'm happy —
And yet, sometimes, I wish 't were so
That I might be the youngster sappy
Of fifteen years ago!

SKATING.

DIVINER than wine is this rarefied air,
Crisp and keen and withal stimulating ;
The weather to laugh, to love, to drown care —
The weather the gods make expressly for skating !

They 've given us much to be glad for — the gods —
But nothing in sport so perfect as this is,
Of seasonable pleasures the keenest, by odds,
The sparkling champagne of Winter's blisses !

A sport, did I call it? Ah, yes, but much more —
An art that admits of elaborating —
An ethical science, not studied of yore,
But a science no less, is our modern skating.

If the sound of the jingling sleighbell captures
The ear and the soul by the fun it suggests ;
If gushing young damsels go into raptures
At thought of old Winter's joy-giving bequests ;

How far more deserving of popular praise
Is the glorious sport, the science precise,
The poetry of steel, the art that can raise
Warm-blooded philosophy out of mere ice !

And then for the rare, the bracing tonic
A turn on the ice affords at all times ;
Infallible cure for those ills Byronic,
Which lead to dyspepsia, and often to rhymes !

What poetry lies in a pair of skates !
What volumes of unrecorded romances !
The very decrees of the changeless Fates
(Under conceivable circumstances)

Would need to be altered to suit the fancy
Of some sweet wizard, who thought it nice
To show the power of Love's necromancy
While doing the outer edge on ice !

What melody is there like to the clinking
Of polished steel on glassy ice ?
What pleasure, when night's star-eyes are winking,
To the joys of a frozen paradise ?

Gracefully gliding hither and thither,
Motion becomes a rhythmic metre ;
The soul expands, and the thoughts that wither
The heart give place to the truer, the sweeter.

For a sense of larger freedom comes
With the body's glad exhilarating,
And man more readily solves life's sums
After an hour's vigorous skating !

THE CIRCUS.

O H, there's many a jolly thing
That blossoms with the Spring,
For then it is that Nature her miracles doth work us ;
But of all the things that sprout,
The best, beyond a doubt,
Is the canvas-tented, sawdust-scented, always jolly
circus !

With a thrill of glad surprise
The youngster stands and eyes
Each gorgeous colored poster that decorates the fences,
And which, in glowing terms,
His own belief confirms,
That the coming show to all who go will dazzle quite
their senses.

And when the day arrives,
And the gilded chariot drives
Resplendent through the town, with music playing,
Pray, where's the boy who'd not
Give all the wealth he's got
To be the clown who wins renown by funny speeches
saying?

And once within the tent,
Though it takes his every cent,
Your ten-year-old is happier than any monarch ruling ;
While he laughs with keenest zest,
And declares each act the best,
From the entrée gay with rich array to final trick-mule's
fooling.

The intrepid bareback rider,
With the girl whose skirts don't hide her,
The leapers and the tumblers, and the horse to music
prancing,
And the brothers who with ease
Mount the treacherous trapeze,
And the spangle-suited, nimble-footed gent who keeps
the barrel dancing ;

The nerves that never falter,
The double-somersaulter,
Who clears a stud of horses with safety and precision —
All these their glory fling
Around the sawdust ring,
And so enamour by their glamour every boyish vision.

To you and me, perhaps
(Old, gray and wrinkled chaps),
This glamour, with some other things, has long ago
departed ;

But your trustful ten-year-old
Finds all the glitter gold,
And so did you before you grew too wise to be light-
hearted.

So the praises still I sing
Of the jolly sawdust-ring,
Which comes to us when Nature her miracles doth
work us ;
For the happiest of things
Which the gentle Spring-time brings
Is the canvas-tented, sawdust-scented, much frequented
circus.

PLAYING BILLIARDS.

LAST night, Nell and I played billiards together ;
You play, I presume, but I somewhat doubt
whether

You ever crossed cues with a rival so fair,
So bewitchingly witching as Nellie Azare.

She's young and vivacious, and wondrously witty ;
Not quite eighteen, but dangerously pretty ;
She's as sprightly and saucy as Mlle. Aimee,
And her foot is as dainty — she wears number three.

Her form is neither too stout nor too slender,
Her lips ruby-red, and her voice softly tender ;
In short, she's perfection's model device,
A little bit naughty, but dreadfully nice !

I am, as you know, fond of billiards — ay, quite so ;
But somehow or other, I got, last night, so
Completely bewildered — and pray who would not ? —
I could n't, in truth, make the simplest shot.

In spite of myself, my thoughts would keep straying
To Nell, instead of the game we were playing ;
Her ravishing beauty so puzzled me quite
I could n't have told the red ball from the white.

We had finished one game, and were playing another :
I was making worse work than I had of the other, —
When Nell struck her ball a sharp little blow,
And stood watching its course, with cheeks all aglow.

How tempting she looked in her dress of white muslin !
'T would have set a philosopher's brain to puzzlin'
In striving to grasp an object so fair,
As was Nellie last night, while standing there.

And watching her thus, as she stood, with lips parted,
Eagerly noting the balls, I was started
Suddenly out of my visions of bliss
By the sweet words uttered, *Kiss, do kiss !*

Of course Nell addressed the balls on the table ;
But where is the chap that would ever be able
To stoically let such a chance as that pass ?
If there be any such, I 'm not of the class !

Whether or not the balls came in contact,
I trow that I could n't now tell you, on fact ;
But I have n't, I 'm sure, the least doubt as to this,
That Nellie received what she asked for — *a kiss !*

AN HONEST CONFESSION.

WITH thoughts of companionship only,
I sit in my bleak little room,
Dejected, despondent and lonely,
While the twilight deepens to gloom ;
I sit here and stare at the ceiling,
And muse and wonder and think
How hard is the task of living
By paper and pen and ink.

Ah, once, I remember, I fancied
That writing would win me a name —
The world at that time was less rancid,
And I yearned for the bubble of fame ;
So, filled with a burning desire,
I sat down to labor and think —
To astonish mankind by the magic
Of paper and pen and ink.

I began on an epic, and finished
Some twenty odd lines, and no more ;
Then essayed, with pluck undiminished,
A drama, which died at Act Four ;

Then I courted the coyish Erato,
Nor permitted my spirits to sink —
I was bound to get riches and honor
From paper and pen and ink.

Alas for the dreams that I cherished
When first I laid hold of a pen !
Alas for the hopes that have perished,
And the misery suffered since then !
Where now is that spirit courageous
Which was never to falter or shrink ?
Where — where are the triumphs I dreamed of
With paper and pen and ink ?

Once it caused me a thrill and a flutter
To see my effusions in print ;
Now I write for my bread and my butter,
And my heart is as hard as a flint.
You may talk of the mythical muses,
But the craving for meat and for drink
Is the truest incentive to labor
With paper and pen and ink !

I weave the most thrilling romances
Out of fabrics exceedingly thin —
Brave knights with their armor and lances,
And maidens with lily-white skin :
And I murder those maidens so lovely,
Then restore 'em to life in a wink,

And marry 'em off to a villain,
With paper and pen and ink !

I have won neither wealth nor position,
Nor the coveted prize of a name ;
I have buried the dreams of ambition,
And forgotten the phantom of fame.
I labor no longer on epics,
Nor tremble on tragedy's brink —
I am thankful to earn a bare living
With paper and pen and ink.

So, with thoughts for companionship only,
I sit in my bleak little room,
Dejected, despondent and lonely,
While the twilight deepens with gloom ;
I sit here and stare at the ceiling,
And smile to myself as I think
Of the castles in Spain I erected
On paper and pen and ink !

THE FLIGHT OF THE SWALLOW.

I HAD eaten my peaches and cream,
And ended my butterfly flight ;
I was rudely awakened from Fame's fair dream
To the palpable darkness of night.
I was lacking in credit and gold,
On Poverty's ocean afloat,
When, having relinquished the world, I sold
My cherished, my swallow-tail coat.

'T was the last of the treasures I owned,
A relic of days when I thrived
On the honey which others had gathered, and droned
While the bees of humanity hived ;
The last of my treasures — of things
Which I donned for the German and club.
For, pray, of what use were butterfly wings,
When I found myself turned to a grub ?

As I clutched the begrimed bank-notes,
Which exuded a musty smell,
I turned with a sigh to the best of my coats,
And bade it a silent farewell ;
Farewell to the days that are gone,
To the beauty that round me did float,

To the shapely white arm that was lovingly drawn
Through the sleeve of that swallow-tail coat.

Farewell to the nut-brown curls,
To the blue, beseeching eyes ;
Farewell to the queen of peach-bloom girls
Who answered my words with her sighs.
My heart she heavily smote,
But why should I pine or cry ?
She sold her soul as I sold my coat,
To one who had cash to buy !

Farewell to the flaming jets
In the brilliant and gay saloon ;
Farewell to the odor of mignonettes
In the fairer light of the moon.
Farewell to the lover's song,
Attuned to a bird-like throat ;
The faith that promised to last so long
Has not outworn this coat.

There, into the pile it is cast,
And I seize on the money instead ;
I have sold the coat, but its history past
Is stitched with a golden thread.
My longings may all be vain,
On poverty's ocean I float,
But no one shall know what castles in Spain
I sold with my swallow-tail coat !

ANTHONY'S PRAYER.

A VERSE FOR THE CHRISTMAS TIME.

IN Poverty Tenement, on the fourth floor,
Along with the other dwellers — a score —
With his widowed mother, lived Anthony More.

He was weak in body and weaker in mind,
A poor little cripple, and more than half blind,
Yet seemingly quite to his fate resigned.

His dozen years on earth had been spent
In rooms where the struggle of life was the rent —
Where nobody knew what Christmas meant.

But it happened that one particular year
He had chanced, somehow, the story to hear
Of the birth of the Child whom the world holds dear.

And likewise he 'd heard of the jolly old saint —
How he came down the chimney, all rosy and quaint,
And filled all the stockings, with never complaint.

And, believing it all, poor Anthony More,
On the night before Christmas, knelt down on the floor
And prayed — which he never had done before.

He asked the good saint for a pair of shoes,
For an overcoat, such as his fancy would choose,
And a jack-knife — two-bladed — and fashioned to use.

Now, whether or not St. Nicholas heard
The prayer of the boy must be inferred,
But this is the simple fact that occurred :

Gambler Jack, who lived on the floor,
As he passed that night through the hall to the door,
Stopped to listen to Anthony More ;

And somehow the words of the boy took him back
To the days when he — yes, Gambler Jack —
Trusted in Santa Claus and his pack !

And he thought how the stocking he used to hang
By the old chimney-place where the cricket sang —
And lo, through the years the church-bells rang,

Rang as they used to ring of old,
When first the wonderful story was told
By a mother's lips, now long grown cold.

Then forth from Poverty Tenement,
With his mind on a single purpose bent,
Gambler Jack in the bleak night went.

Early next morning, when Anthony More
Awoke, he saw by his cot on the floor
Such a sight as he never had seen before.

For there was the overcoat, warm and well-made,
And the shoes, and the knife with its second blade —
All the good things for which he had prayed !

And Anthony? Well, I can only say
There never was joy on a Christmas-day
Like his, be the subject whatever it may !

He even insisted that Gambler Jack —
Who, alone of the Tenement, somehow, held back —
Should inspect the treasures from Santa Claus' pack.

And looking on, in his quiet way,
Gambler Jack was heard to say :
" So all these come to yer 'cause yer pray ?

" Well, Tony, my boy, the racket is plain —
If I were you, I 'd work it again,
And I 'll lay you odds that it won't prove vain ! "

GROWING OLD.

AT six — I well remember when —
I fancied all folks old at ten.

But when I 'd turned my first decade,
Fifteen appeared more truly staid.

But when the fifteenth round I 'd run,
I thought none old till twenty-one.

Then oddly, when I 'd reached that age,
I held that thirty made folks sage.

But when my thirtieth year was told,
I said : " At twoscore men grow old ! "

Yet twoscore came and found me thrifty,
And so I drew the line at fifty.

But when I reached that age, I swore
None could be old until threescore !

And here I am at sixty now,
As young as when at six, I trow !

'T is true, my hair is somewhat gray,
And that I use a cane, to-day ;

'T is true, these rogues about my knee
Say " Grandpa !" when they speak to me ;

But, bless your soul, I 'm young as when
I thought all people old at ten !

Perhaps a little wiser grown —
Perhaps some old illusions flown ;

But wond'ring still, while years have rolled,
When is it that a man grows old ?

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS.

THE gay Christmas time it is ended,
The Holiday course has been run,
And, while no offence is intended
To any particular one,
I wish to make one observation
And then, like the season, I 'm done.

To the ancient and honorable custom
Of giving gifts once in the year —
Provided, of course, it don't bust 'em —
All people should strive to adhere ;
And if they can give but a trifle,
Give that with a slice of good cheer !

Yet, while we would show our expression
Of love or esteem for a friend,
A proper amount of discretion
In choosing the token might tend
To add to the pleasure of getting
The little or much we expend.

It chanced this particular season
I needed some slippers right bad,
And hinted the same for that reason
On every occasion I had ;
And now I am of the conviction
I must at the time have been mad !

First, Nellie, my cousin, inquired
What number my boot was ; and when
I told her I thought I aspired
To altitudes close upon ten,
She looked sympathizingly at me
And said ; “ Is it possible, Ben ? ”

And the very next day Arabella
Propounded the query likewise —
And Flora, and Dora, and Ella
All wanted to find out my “ size ; ”
And the evening I called on Alida
She measured my foot with her eyes !

Well, Christmas Day dawned, and the dawning
Was filled with bright visions, you know ;
And I opened my eyes after yawning,
And glanced at the carpet below —
*And six pairs of slippers were lying
Solemnly there in a row !*

Six pairs of slippers ! Great heavens !

Wrought with a skill superfine —

Ranging from eights to elevens —

Rich and unique in design ;

And a dozen they made altogether,

And all of the dozen were mine !

I tried to look pleased and contented —

For that was the best I could do ;

I took 'em all up and commented

On the beauties presented to view,

And I said they were “ Just what I wanted ! ”

And “ Twelve is better than two ! ”

But I locked three pairs in my closet,

And one I have lent to St. Clair,

And one — I wonder whose was it ? —

I gave to the Charity Fair !

And the last — well, those are elevens,

And those are the ones I shall wear !

And while I 'm extending my “ flippers ”

In gratitude deep and sincere,

I wish to remark that twelve slippers

Are rather too many to steer ;

And I take this occasion for stating

That I shan't expect any next year.

TO LADY CLARICE.

YOU have asked me, Lady Clarice, my lady none
so fair,
If I would send a rosebud to twine amid your hair.

But oh ! my Lady Clarice, I think you will agree,
That never favor puzzled man as this has puzzled me.

For I cannot, Lady Clarice, I cannot send to you,
The rose that opes in springtime — the rose of crim-
son hue —

For when the red rose saw thee in all thy careless grace,
'T would pale before the richer glow that mantles thy
fair face.

Nor yet, my Lady Clarice, I cannot send to you
The rose that blows in autumn — the rose of snow-
white hue —

For when the white rose saw thee, ah ! then it would,
I trow,
Blush scarlet at the purer white upon my lady's brow.

And so, my Lady Clarice, you see I 'm puzzled quite,
I cannot send the crimson rose — I cannot send the
white —

And either you, my lady, must grow, I ween, more
plain,
Or otherwise Dame Nature make the roses o'er again.

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO.

YOU may reason it out on paper,
In a logical sort of a way,
With a good many "thens" and "therefores"
That Winter is fairer than May.
But few will ever believe it,
Although you claim that 't is ;
Opinions are stronger than logic,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

You may deck out a first-term Freshman,
Who is seeking for classical lore,
With a cane and well-brushed beaver
And call him a Sophomore,
Yet something will still be wanting,
Which everybody will miss ;
In spite of his hat he 's a Freshman,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

And so in the choicest of rhetoric,
That sounds precisely like truth,
You may tell us, over and over,
That age is better than youth ;

You may head the four objections
With a "so," a "thus," and a "this,"
But no one will ever believe 'em,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

You may tell us that age cares nothing
For the pleasures of feasting and wine,
And hence has a good digestion,
Which may all be very fine ;
But give us the sherry and oysters,
Though it be a little amiss,
And we 'll run our chance on dyspepsia,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

You may put in the mouth of Cato
Fine sayings, exceedingly wise,
How pleasure is hostile to reason
And blinds the spirit's eyes.
You may tell us very gravely
Of the pleasure that lies in a kiss,
But you did n't use to think so,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

You may harp o'er the speech of Archytas,
Who likens pleasure to pest,
And calls it the curse of our nature,
Pshaw ! Archy, give us a rest.
You may make us think it is logic,
Yet I 'm fully persuaded of this,

You 'd rather take pleasure than small-pox,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

You never heard John Pierpont,
In golden measures sing,
"That to laugh as a boy were better
Than to reign a gray-haired king !"
And yet the whole of your essay
Has n't the truth of this ;
A pity you could n't have known it,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

Gray hairs, no doubt, bring wisdom,
The question we won't dispute ;
But who, for the blossom of May-time,
Would take the ripened fruit ?
'T is hope gives life its beauty ;
Though the day be perfect bliss,
The morrow is always fairer,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

And youth is the time for dreaming :
In its golden, halcyon days
We weave the brightest colors
In the future's mystical maze.
'T is then we aim the highest,
And whether we hit or miss,
There 's pleasure in the aiming,
O Marcus Tullius Cis !

MARCH.

MONTH whom nobody praises,
Boisterous, blustering, blue, March,
Here 's a poor rhymster who raises
His voice in honor of you, March ;
What if no buttercups, daisies
Nor mignonette ever yet grew, March,
Under thy skies of leaden,
Of deaden and desolate hue, March?
Facing thy blasts is sport while it lasts
To those who 're brave and true, March.
Volumes of verse have been written
On May — presumably arch —
But never a poet was smitten
By thine Amazon beauties, O March !
And yet, though thy face is frost-bitten,
And you sometimes have taken the starch
Entirely out of me, March,
I never will give you the mitten,
For spite of your name and leonine fame
You are better than any mere kitten !

Not weavers of verses Byronic,
Who scoff at the grandeur of toil,
Can take thy sharp air as a tonic —
Their hope is in cod-liver oil ;
Not girls, whose faces are mealy,
Whose waists are wasted in stays,
Find aught in thy presence to praise ;
But the maidens who follow out freely
Great Nature's infallible ways —
Ah, them thy chilling breath braces,
And a walk on thy blustering days
Adds freshness to all their fair graces,
Brings rich color into their faces,
Brightens their eyes and sets their blood flowing
Like wine through their veins while high winds are
blowing.
Month whom nobody praises,
This song is written for you, March.
Enough of sunshine and daisies —
You nourish the strong and the true, March.
Let the weak singers then sigh on,
Their sonnets on May are a sham, March ;
What is the roar of a lion,
If it ends in the bleat of a lamb, March !

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH.

VERY early in the morning
Sounds the first sharp note of warning,
Sounds the small boy's horn, whose horning
Gains him nothing but berating ;
And from that untimely waking
Till the hour when heads go aching
There is really no mistaking
That mankind is celebrating.

Everywhere a smell of powder,
Down the Bay clubs eating chowder,
Pistols small and cannon louder
Through the air reverberating ;
Freedom's flag on house-tops flying,
Freedom's glorious sons defying
Frequent cocktails, thus supplying
Ardor for their celebrating.

Country-people in the city,
Town-folk gone on some committee
To the country. Wise and witty
Orators elaborating

Speeches fiercely patriotic,
Hurling threats at thrones despotic,
Furnishing a sweet narcotic
To their hearers, celebrating.

Picnics, dances, cheap excursions,
Claret-punches, sea immersions,
Extra matinée diversions,
Quite beyond enumerating ;
Sack and tub and fat-men's races,
Yachting, trotting, running bases,
Shooting, tooting, mopping faces —
That 's the way of celebrating.

Day of days for wire-walkers,
Punch and Judy, sideshow-talkers,
Lemonade and ice-cream hawkers —
All will find a harvest waiting.
Forth will go the picarooners,
Up will go the brave ballooners,
Down will go the beer in schooners,
All by way of celebrating.

Brightest day (when 't is n't Sunday)
To the youngster who, for one day,
Finds his long-looked-forth-to fun pay
For the months of anxious waiting.
What with pin-wheels, rockets, stingers,
He shall find when twilight lingers

There are left him but nine fingers,
What is that to celebrating?

In your days of catechism
Ere doubt came, or rheumatism,
High above all criticism
Seemed this day's anticipating ;
So, when now the din grows louder,
Think if ever you 've been prouder
Or as happy as when powder
Burned your fingers celebrating !

MY FIRST VALENTINE.

IS it not a little funny
That through all the years I've been
Getting fat and getting money,
Getting wise and learning men —
That through all these years, devoted
To the things for which we pine,
I have never once forgotten
My first sweet Valentine?

She was but a little maiden,
With the eyes of a gazelle,
And a face the dimples played in,
And a laugh that threw its spell
Over me and all who heard it ;
She was seven, I was nine,
And we made mud-pies together —
I and my first Valentine.

Ah, with what refreshing candor
Did we talk about our love,
Rear our castles, vaster, grander,
Than the pine-capped hills above !

How we peered into the future,
Helped by many a mystic sign,
Trusting to the seeds of apples, —
I and my first Valentine.

When the month of February
Brought the day for which I prayed,
Secretly I sent a very
Loving token to the maid :
Two blue hearts pierced by an arrow —
That was part of the design —
With a yellow Cupid shooting
Straight at my first Valentine.

Ah, what wings of love I lent it,
That first mission she received ;
Then denied that I had sent it,
Till she told me she believed
It had come from Tommy Watkins —
Strongest rival then of mine —
Whereupon I, blushing, told her
I had sent the Valentine.

Sweet confession ! Was it naughty
In the little maid to know ? —
Bless my stars, and that was forty,
More than forty years ago !
Is she dead or is she living,
Does she ever sit and pine

For the blue-eyed happy youngster
Who was her first Valentine?

Here am I, gray-haired and portly,
With a wife a trifle stout ;
With an air I think that 's courtly,
And a fortune, and the gout —
Here am I, an honored father,
Sentimentalizing fine
Over tissue-paper Cupids
Sent to my first Valentine !

Gracious, if the world should know it !
Yet the memory of those days
Stirs within me what a poet
Might embody in his lays —
Comes the fragrance of the meadows,
Comes the blood that thrills like wine,
Comes the wonderland of childhood
Back with my first Valentine !

Yes, it is a little funny,
That through all I have contrived,
Somehow, to preserve the honey
Which young love for me once hived ;
And I find its flavor pleasant,
As I sit and sip my wine,
Dreaming still of paper Cupids
And of my first Valentine.

HIS IDEA OF EDEN.

CONTENTED? Of course I 'm contented :
Did ever your eyes behold
Such comfort as here is presented
To a bachelor crusty and old?

For all the possessions of Adam,
Under his fig-tree and vine,
I would n't exchange, if I had 'em,
These comfortable quarters of mine !

Here 's Eden itself in a parlor —
The Eden that meets my ideas,
Void of the beasts that would snarl, or
The bugs that would crawl in your ears.

There 's no prohibition in choosing
The fruit your fancies prefer,
No wily serpent diffusing
False doctrines, creating a stir.

Pray, what were the pleasure of plucking
An apple before it is ripe
Compared to the solace of sucking
This old and odorous pipe?

Or what were the taste of pomegranate
By the side of coffee and cake?
Or a fig — yes, from Eden — now can it
Compare with a tenderloin steak?

To sleep in a bower might answer
For Adam, who relished such things —
He lived in the tropic of Cancer —
But give me a mattress, with springs!

And evenings in Eden — how stupid,
With nowhere to go but to bed;
I would rather surrender to Cupid
Than lead such a life as he led!

No races, no clubs, no regattas,
No politics, theatres, nor squibs —
Could a world devoid of these matters
Be Paradise unto his nibs?

Give me just what I have — this bay-window,
These quarters exquisitely nice,
My books, and my pipe, and, sin though
I may, it is still Paradise!

But in one thing my garden is lacking —
What is that you would have me believe?
Its thistles and roses ransacking,
My Eden is minus an Eve.

Well, now, I declare, this is taunting —
You crusty, you chronic old snarler ;
The very one thing that is wanting
Makes Paradise out of my parlor !

UNRHYMED SORROW.

I N greener years, with ready skill,
I sang of death and age and sorrow,
And wept (in anapæsts) at will,
Or sighed (in iambs) for the morrow.

How easy then to mourn in rhyme —
To sing of youth's departed pleasures ;
To hurl anathemas at time,
In heavy, grave, dactylic measures.

How easy when the world was fair,
And dinners readily digested,
To strike the lyre of despair,
And talk of trials never tested.

Because fair Marion or Maud,
Or some one whom I don't remember,
Turned out to be a precious fraud,
I likened life to bleak December.

And as for womankind, I swore
I'd have no further dealings with 'em ;
I'd found them faithless as of yore —
All that I put in flowing rhythm.

I gnawed on mischief's bone with zest,
On death philosophized profoundly,
And wrote of nights devoid of rest —
Then went to bed and slept quite soundly.

It pleased me then, in rhythmic feet,
To harp on happiness departed,
The while I found the present sweet,
And grief a sore which rarely smarted.

Alas, that in those lusty days,
When I was vigorous and lacked ills,
I thus could every sorrow phrase,
And suffer so in measured dactyls !

But now, when trials real have come,
The skill of youth I may not borrow ;
And lo ! the lips that sang are dumb —
They cannot find a speech for sorrow !

Now, when the sterner touch of time
Has rounded out my life completer,
I cannot seek relief in rhyme,
Nor measure grief by any metre !

THE CITY ROOSTER.

UNFORTUNATE rooster ! who more deserving
of pity

Than you? Deserted and lonely,
You strut over cobblestones here in the slums of the
city,
With one aged hen, and one only.

The glory, the strength, the pride of your race have
departed,

Your nature itself is erratic ;
You 're weak in the legs, and show, by your tail, you 're
faint-hearted,
While even your crow is asthmatic.

You never have known the freedom of rural existence,
The quiet of country places —

Or, if you have, they are lost in memory's distance,
Along with your chickenhood's graces.

The bustle, the roar, the city's monotonous thunder —

To you, these have grown an old story ;
A roost on an ashbox and search in the gutter for plunder —

That measures your conquest and glory.

Have you no courage to grapple with Fate, the stern
vixen,

To crow at her till you 've induced her
To give you the chance more civilized circles to mix in,
And be a respectable rooster?

At times do you feel no regrets, as leaden as bullets,
And rises there never a vision
Of corn-cribs, of haylofts, of hens and attractive young
pullets,
Of polygamous barnyards Elysian?

'T is true you 're deserving of pity, and pity of pities
That here, in the gutters, thou prowlest ;
For surely you 've learned the civilization of cities
To fowls is barbarity foulest.

And well for those happier birds, that gobble and frolic
Where mud and misfortune come never,
Whose cornful and burdenless lives are all poetry bu-
colic,
Till they merge into poultry forever !

Unfortunate rooster ! Crestfallen, alone, melancholy,
I fancy this truth you would utter :
No doubt to be cock of the walk is all very jolly,
But not to be cock of the gutter !

MY PIPE.

HERE 'S a song for a friend who is steadfast and
trusty,

A friend of the years that are mellow and ripe,
Whose soul is an ember, whose virtues are lusty —
My blackened and odorous brierwood-pipe.

I will fill up the bowl with this genuine Durham,
And dream as I smoke and smoke as I dream.
Leaving cigars to those who prefer 'em,
I 'll fashion a rhyme for a worthier theme.

In earlier years I turned my affection
To La Españolas and strong Henry Clays ;
But now, in the age of riper reflection,
I turn to my pipe and sing of its praise.

Short is its stem and blackened its face is,
Crusted by time its curious bowl ;
And yet, though lacking exterior graces,
Warm is its heart and glowing its soul !

I cherish the wood that furnished it higher
Than Lebanon cedar or polished oak,
For out of the hardy and tough-fibered brier
Was carved the pipe which I dreamily smoke.

What reck's it if fortune proves shallow and fickle?
What matters it now if love's at an end?
The harvester Time, with his keen-whetted sickle,
Has spared me at least this faithfulest friend.

The hopes that once burned in my breast are now ashes,
As blackened and charred as these in the bowl;
And arid as gourds or the dry calabashes
Are the beds of the streams that nourished my soul.

Where once I trod in the paths flower-laden,
Now thorns, deep-piercing, prick my feet;
And ever there rises the face of the maiden
Whose mem'ry is gall as her love was sweet.

Of all that is best the years have bereft me —
Ambition is dead, and friendship is cold;
The blossoms of May have wilted and left me
No fruit for the Autumn, no apples of gold.

Yet never my lips shall fall to complaining,
Though time be heavy and sorrow be ripe;
For still with my trials I fancy I'm gaining
A closer communion with you, my good pipe.

And watching the smoke as it rises before me,
Forgetful I grow of life's turbulent stream ;
While a feeling of rest delicious steals o'er me,
And earth seems fair as the realm of a dream.

Then here 's to my pipe with its soul in an ember !
Rich blessings upon its black bowl I 'll invoke ;
Nor ever repine when I chance to remember
That all of my dreams have ended in smoke !

THE COUNTY FAIR.

DID ever you go,
I would like to know,
To a genuine country, county fair?
If not, though blasé, there awaits you one day
Of enjoyment as keen, of pleasure as rare,
As ever you 've found in this world anywhere,

Though in Paris you 've dined,
And in Burgundy winned,
Been surfeited quite by sensual blisses ;
Made a cruise in a yacht, seen — the Lord knows
what,
And drunk of the honey of rose-lipped kisses
(Bestowed by some fair less rural than this is).

You 've lost, I repeat,
Such a wholesome treat,
If a country fair you never attended,
That as soon as you can, pray, follow my plan,
And go — for you 'll own that the time thus expended
Affords both amusement and novelty blended.

And what is there there
At the county fair?

Ah, easier asked than answered, that question :

There are sheep with fine wool, and sharpers to pull
The same over eyes which in wonderment rest on
The over-fat pigs that suggest indigestion.

There are cows with short horns,
And the fellow who scorns
To take his horn short, while of long ones no lack is ;
There are pumpkins of sizes to rake in the prizes,
And also that species which bets where the jack is —
The jackass thus proving how cunning his knack is.

Pears, apples and grapes,
All species and shapes
Of the products of field, of garden, of dairy ;
Cream, butter and milk, and the bedquilt of silk,
Made of nine hundred bits by some rural fairy,
With No. 10 socks knit by ten-year-old Mary !

The sideshow — the races —
(Where the trotter who places
A mile at his heels in 2:50 's the winner) ;
The eating-booth where one oyster's your share
In a plate of soup just a trifle thinner
Than the skeleton seen in the show before dinner !

Punch and Judy, of course,
And the chap who grows hoarse
In offering solid gold rings for a shilling ;
The man who cures corns, and the fakir who warns
You "There 's only three left, and who 's the next
willing
To pass in his tin for this box which I 'm filling?"

But go to the fair,
If you 'd know what is there —
Go, and be served with a fare many sided ;
And if it should take some courage to make
The journey alone through the country, unguided,
Be brave, and deserve the fair, as I did !

HER OPINION OF THE PLAY.

DO I like it? I think it just splendid !
You see how I speak out my mind,
And I think 't would be better if men did
The same when they feel so inclined.
But no, you 're all dumb as an oyster,
You critics who sit here and stare,
Looking grave as a monk in his cloister —
You have n't laughed once, I declare !

I 'm sure there 's been lots that is jolly,
And more that 's exciting, you 'll own ;
Why, I pity the poor hero's folly
As if he were some one I 'd known !
And was n't it grand and heroic
When he shielded that friendless girl Sue?
'T would have quickened the pulse of a stoic,
But of course, sir, it could n't rouse you !

And then for the villain De Lancey —
Now, does n't he act with a dash?

Such art and such delicate fancy,
And — did you observe his moustache?
He made my very blood tingle
When he threw himself down on his knees —
Do you know if he 's married or single?
Yes, the villain — there, laugh if you please !

I admit I know nothing of "action,"
Of "unities," "plot," and the rest,
But the play gives complete satisfaction,
And that is a good enough test.
Yes, I know you will pick it to pieces
In your horribly savage review,
But, for me, its interest increases
Because 't will be censured by you !

I should think 't would be awfully jolly
For the author to make such a hit ;
How he pricks all the bubbles of folly
With his sharp little needle of wit !
I am sure he is perfectly charming,
Or he never could write such a play —
(I declare, sir, it 's really alarming
To have you sit staring that way !)

And oh, if I only were brighter,
And not such a poor little dunce,

I should so like to meet with the writer,
For I know I should love him at once.
Yes, I should, though you think it audacious,
And I'd tell him so, too, which is more,
And — *you* are the author? — good gracious !
Why did n't you say so before?

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS.

MUD-STAINED and torn, upon the sidewalk
 lying,
Stripped of the glory of her regal parts,
Yet still the turn of fortune's wheel defying,
I found, to-day, this tattered queen of hearts.

Where now, I wonder, are her old companions,
The fifty-one inseparable friends?
In beer saloons, or Rocky Mountain cañons —
At sea, or in the earth's remotest ends?

Like Israel's tribe they're tossed about and scattered,
The kings themselves perhaps have grown unclean;
And yet, though cast aside and mud-bespattered,
This exile queen of hearts is still a queen.

Who knows but some time jewelled fingers shuffled
The pack in which she held an honored place?
Who knows what placid tempers she has ruffled
At whist, by trumping an obtrusive ace?

Or when the higher honors both were boarded,
And she was queen, indeed, of all the pack,
How proudly did she take the last trump, hoarded —
How like a woman did she win the jack !

And ah ! how fondly was her face regarded
By him who saw its deeply crimson blush,
Just after he had doubtingly discarded
A spade, and drawn to hearts to fill a flush !

And possibly — for cards are evil's marrow,
And queens are sometimes instruments of sin —
'T is possible, I say, that, turned at faro,
This queen has caused the coppered stack to win.

Her life, I fancy, opened bright and merry,
But unremittent play brought penance dear ;
And so, perchance, from rouge-et-noir and sherry,
She came in time to pinochle and beer.

And then — ah, well ! no sermon need I utter —
Enough to know she lost her winning arts,
And, all forsaken, sank into the gutter,
Like many another luckless queen of hearts !

THE WEATHER IN VERSE.

THE undersigned desires, in a modest sort of way,
To make the observation, which properly he may,
To wit: That writing verses on the several solar seasons
Is most uncertain business, and for these conclusive
reasons :

In the middle of the Autumn the subscriber did compose

A sonnet on November, showing how the spirit grows
Unhappy and despondent at the season of the year
When the skies are dull and leaden, and the days are
chill and drear.

Perhaps you may recall to mind that, when November
came,

No leaden skies nor chilly days accompanied the same ;
But the weather was as balmy as in Florida you 'd find,
And that sonnet on November was respectfully declined !

With laudable ambition to prepare a worthy rhyme,
The writer wrote a Christmas song three weeks ahead
of time ;
And there was frequent reference to the sharp and
piercing air,
And likewise to the cold white snow that covered earth
so fair.

I scarcely need remind you that the Christmas did not
bring
The piercing air and cold white snow of which I chose
to sing :
'T was all ethereal mildness while for icicles I yearned,
And of course my frigid verses were with cordial warmth
returned.

This very Spring I set to work — 't was on an April day,
And warm as June — I set to work and wrote an ode
on May ;
The inspiration may have come in part from what I
owed,
But while I sang of gentle Spring I swear it up and
snowed !

And once, when dew inspired me a pastoral to spin,
It happened, when the poem was done, a dreadful
drought set in ;

There was no moisture in the earth, which dry and
dryer grew,
And the piece on dew came back to me with six cents
postage due !

And for these conclusive reasons it is obviously plain
That verses on the weather are precarious and vain ;
And the undersigned would only add, so far as he can
see,
The trouble 's not the metre, but the meteorology !

TO A PRETTY SCHOOLMA'AM.

IF only fate would grant, thus late, the one thing I
beseech 'er —

That I might go to school again, and have you for my
teacher —

I'd pick up more of solid lore before a week was ended
Than ever yet I've chanced to get at all the schools
I've 'tended.

I would n't ask again to bask in childhood's sunlight
brisker —

I'd take my seat just as I am, with coat-tail and with
whisker,

And every rule laid down in school should have my
strict alliance ;

I'd fairly live on wisdom's bread, and drink of naught
but science !

The irksome path which learning hath would turn to
one of pleasure,

And every musty " ology " become a precious treasure ;

With porous mind, intent to find the truth of your in-
struction,
I'd grow a sort of learned sponge — a philosophic
suction !

Astronomy would have for me a charm before-unheeded,
When neither chart nor telescope would ever once be
needed ;
I'd never pore long hours o'er a problem wrong to
right it,
For I would make your face the sky, your eyes the
stars that light it.

From botany I'd quickly cull the very germ and es-
sence,
And learn to tell the *panicle* or *spadix inflorescence*.
Ah, little need I'd have indeed of what the book
deposes ;
I'd take your cheeks for specimens, and analyze their
roses.

Conchology would no more be a science dull and
prosy ;
I'd catch a sight of small teeth white between lips ripe
and rosy,
And then for bivalves I would crave, and wonder late
and early
If ever in a mollusk yet were hidden pearls so pearly.

And as for ornithology — the cuckoo, *C. canorus*,
Might chirp away the live-long day, I should n't heed
his chorus ;
Your voice would be enough for me, and with its music
ringing,
I 'd cease to think the bobolink knew anything of
singing.

Mythology would cease to be an antiquated fable,
When I could turn, and there discern a Hebe at the
table.
Things palæontological would live beneath your teach-
ing —
I 'd even take theology, if you would do the preaching.

And thus together while we trod through learning's
tangled mazes,
And caught a peep at science deep amid its countless
phases,
We 'd learn at last by physic's laws, most rigidly enacted,
How very natural it is that bodies are attracted !

A SONG.

I WILL drink this amber-hued,
Aromatic sherry
To the girl I loved and wooed —
Modest maiden merry —
Loved and wooed so long ago :
When it was I scarce may know.

I will drink to those old times
When to breathe was pleasure ;
When my pulse in rhythmic rhymes
Beat to Love's own measure ;
When the dreams of youth were mine,
Amber-hued like sherry wine.

From the goblet I will drain
Time's forgotten flavor ;
Taste those golden days again,
Sweetened by Love's favor,
While I feel the draught divine
Warming all my blood like wine.

What if love be at an end,
Life no longer merry?
Here 's a true and trusty friend,
Aromatic sherry ;
Truer than my love, I know,
Many, many years ago !

FLORA TEMPLE.

THEY have driven her in through the broad, broad
gate,
On the track where time is taken no more ;
They have driven her in, so calm and sedate
You scarce would have known her who knew her
before.

The days of her triumphs had long ago fled ;
All stripped of her strength, bereft of her grace,
She stood while the years passed over her head,
Patiently waiting to enter Death's race.

Rivals rose up to snatch from her brow
The crown which had decked it, the laurel-wreath
green —
Swift-footed, impetuous animals now —
They were stripling colts when Flora was queen !

Her record was beaten, its prestige was slain,
By halves and by quarters they whittled it down,
While the stern driver, Age, drew tighter the rein,
And gave her no chance to win back the crown.

So, robbed of her glory, pray what could she do
But dream of the triumphs won in her prime,
When Kalamazoo was the Waterloo
Which routed her rivals and slaughtered Time?

Then a tear for her memory, a cheer for her fame,
For the plucky old mare who has drawn her last
breath ;
And write on the card, along with her name :
“ She never was distanced except by Death ! ”

UP IN A BALLOON.

THE little earth recedes from view ;
I leave its low dominions,
And sail into the upper blue
On free and fearless pinions.
The river like a serpent creeps
With slow and willowy motion,
And, gazing into purple deeps,
I scan the troubled ocean.

Full nigh a hundred years are gone
Since first the world's attention,
Half idly, was (in Paris) drawn
Unto a balloon ascension.
From then till now, below, above,
Behold man's domination,
Still halting at this problem of
The mid-air's navigation.

But ere another hundred years
Down Time's abyss has speeded,
The doubt shall rise, and lusty cheers
Shall greet the man most needed.
And then behold the wondering world
Exposed no more to chances,

But on the storm's trained pinions whirled
Through ether's vast expanses.

From this high place I see to-day
That future grandly rising ;
I see the sailors sail away,
New lands and worlds surprising ;
I see the wealth of far Cathay,
The wealth of song and story,
Brought as an offering to lay
Before our shrine of glory.

The far-off lands approach so near,
A single day suffices
To go from northern Winters drear
To tropic groves of spices.
No more the treacherous sea shall fright
Its victims with its wailing —
We 'll cross it in a single night,
In air-ships swiftly sailing.

Speed faster on, O wings of Time !
Rise higher, soul of science !
Till man shall stand erect, sublime,
And bid the world defiance.
And when the earth recedes from view,
Above its low dominions
We 'll sail into the upper blue
On free and fearless pinions.

BETWEEN THE ACTS.

DID I sigh, or was it your fancy?
You're certain — quite certain? Ah, well —
Who is that in the box with De Lancy?
No matter. You're bound I shall tell
Why it was that I sighed. On my honor,
'T would puzzle me sorely to say :
A sigh is hardly in keeping
With the rollicking tone of the play.

And here, in the midst of this glitter,
This glory and glamour and glare,
One ought to forget what is bitter,
And drown the grim spectre of Care ;
One ought to be merry, if ever,
And find himself quite at his ease
With the music, the play and the people,
And with you at his side, my Louise.

That air is from " Il Trovatore ; "
I like it — the opera — don't you?
The orchestra is n't my story?
Beg pardon ; it is n't, that's true.

Then why do I shun a confession?
I 've nothing, my love, to confess ;
A sigh is a trivial matter,
To cause you such honest distress.

Let me say that you never looked fairer
Nor younger, I vow, than to-night ;
Your beauty is riper and rarer
Than ever before in my sight ;
And the play is the best of the season,
And you are a queen to my eye,
And nothing could add to my pleasure —
How awkward it was, then, to sigh !

Perhaps 't was the music awaking
A memory long overcast ;
Perhaps the champagne I 've been taking
Has brought up a ghost of the past.
Whatever it was, I was thinking,
Just now as you spoke, of the days
When I lived on the farm at The Corners,
And dreamed of the world and its ways.

The stage and the footlights vanished,
The strains of the music were hushed,
While memories long ago banished
Like a great wave over me rushed ;
And the present was drowned so completely
That my eyes could only behold

How the world was twenty years younger,
And I was but twenty years old !

And there, in the box, where De Lancy
Sits reading the bill of the play,
I saw in the realm of my fancy
The meadow-land stretching away ;
And the house, with its broad, black chimney,
And the brave old sycamore-trees,
And the gate with its broken hinges —
They were there in the box, Louise.

And I heard — not the music of Verdi —
But the brook as it rippled along
At the foot of the gnarled oak sturdy,
Repeating its rhythmical song ;
And the meek-faced cows in the pasture —
I saw them distinctly, I 'll swear —
They were gazing in mild-eyed wonder
From the back of De Lancy's chair !

And the full-throated robins were singing
A song that I had not forgot ;
And De Lancy himself there was swinging
A reaping-hook down in the lot ;
And the echo of childish laughter
Rang out on my listening ear,
And I saw but the gold of the sunset
While I gazed at that gilt chandelier.

You smile at all this, and no wonder —
My picture is stupid? Alas !
Could you look as I looked at it, under
The magic of memory's glass,
It would steal from the past such a beauty
As should hold and enrapture your eye,
As would thrill you and fill you with longings
Which might, perhaps, end in a sigh —

A sigh for those days strong and sturdy,
When life had no intricate sums,
When I could not tell Balfe from Verdi,
Nor the taste of St. Julien from Mumm's ;
When I toiled with an honest endeavor
And slept without dreaming of stocks ;
When I ate with my knife and a relish,
And never had sat in a box.

And I sighed because I was thinking
Of hopes that were hollow and vain,
And because, while fancy was linking
The present and past in a chain,
There rose yet another fair vision —
The face of a girl whom I knew
In those days when I lived at The Corners,
And before I thanked fortune for you.

Was she pretty? Well, not if you fancy
The models of beauty seen here ;

With our critical friend there, De Lancy,
She 'd hardly pass muster, I fear ;
Yet her eyes were the deepest of azure,
Her brow was surpassingly fair,
And her cheeks were as fresh as the roses
Which to-night you have placed in your hair.

And I loved her? There, pray don't be jealous ;
It 's twenty years now since we met,
And a passion, no matter how zealous,
Never lasted through twenty years yet.
I loved her, perhaps, or I thought so,
In those early, confiding old days,
When I lived at the farm at The Corners,
And dreamed of the world and its ways.

There were tears in her eyes when we parted —
But that was a long time ago ;
Perhaps she has lived broken-hearted ?
Perhaps so — I really don't know.
But, trusting alone to my fancy,
Her heart is all right, I should say —
That is she in the box with De Lancy,
And — here 's the last act of the play.

THE WINNING SUIT.

“HAD I played my heart,” she said,
Too ready to take the blame —
“Had I played my heart instead
Of diamonds, when you led,
We should not have lost the game.”

’T was whist, and nothing more —
Prosaic, respectable whist —
And you might have guessed from the score,
Had you chosen to glance it o’er,
That we needed the point we missed.

I blundered at every play,
I trumped my partner’s high,
Threw kings on aces away —
And yet who would n’t, pray,
’Neath the glance of her dazzling eye?

For never, I think, did I hold
Such wretched hands, nor spoil
The possible essence we ’re told
A two-spot or tray may unfold,
When handled according to Hoyle.

What mattered to me the game,
When I knew by my heart's quick thumps
That, whether the red suits came,
Or the blacks, it was all the same,
For Love that night was trumps.

Yes, Love was trumps, I ween,
(Alas, that it was, and alack !)
For what did her glances mean,
This woman I held as the queen
Of all queens in the world's great pack ?

"She has played her heart," thought I,
"In an older game than whist ;
And diamonds never can buy
A glance like that, nor a sigh,
Nor lips like hers to be kissed !"

Ah, well, for the dreams of that night,
And well for the whispered vow ;
The years have brought in their flight
The power of keener sight,
And I think of her coolly now.

"Had I diamonds played," I say,
"When I offered to her my name —
Had I diamonds had to play,
Instead of a heart to slay,
I should not have lost the game !"

VERY TANTALIZING.

THE tortures of Tantalus (wretched old duffer)
Were very provoking, no doubt,
And Prometheus was given a chance to suffer
While his vitals were eaten out ;
Sisyphus rolling his stone forever,
Ixion bound tight to the wheel,
And Tityus feasting the birds on his liver,
All these to our pity appeal.

Yet I claim that, with equal or greater fitness,
Our pity we now may bestow
On the fellow who finds himself doomed to witness
What I did last night at a show ;
'Twas the sight of one pretty woman making
Hot love to another as fair,
A sight to rouse the old Adam by waking
A longing to try such a pair.

What a waste it involved of feminine sweetness,
When either the lover or maid
Would have filled the measure to perfect completeness,
Had the love-scene in private been played !
And how could one carry the stage illusion
When he gazed on the cavalier sweet,

Who displayed her womanly charms in profusion,
And was luscious enough to eat?

In truth, by no possible stretch of fancy
Could any one make it seem right,
For gone was the meat of Love's necromancy,
And the shell was insipid and trite.
To have squeezed the hand of that queenly creature,
I'd have counted a blessing myself;
But the squeezing became a very tame feature,
When done by the other sweet elf!

You have heard the Spanish proverb, that kisses
Without a moustache are like eggs
Without the salt, and it strikes me that this is
A question that nobody begs;
I thought so last night, when kisses were wasted
In a way which was really a fault —
How those osculatory eggs would have tasted,
If I could have furnished the salt!

So I hold that, for genuine tantalization,
Those classic old chaps knew naught;
They found, at least, some compensation
In the glory their tortures brought;
But to watch the love-making of one pretty woman
To another would make the gods grieve —
'T would rouse the old Adam in any breast human,
And in some, perhaps, the old Eve!

ROCKET.

I 'LL tell you how the Christmas came
To Rocket — no, you never met him,
That is, you never knew his name,
Although 't is possible you 've let him
Display his skill upon your shoes ;
A boot-black — Arab, if you choose :
Has inspiration dropped to zero
When such material makes a hero ?

And who was Rocket ? Well, an urchin,

A gamin, dirty, torn and tattered,
Whose chiefest pleasure was to perch in
The Bowery gallery ; there it mattered
But little what the play might be —
Broad farce or point-lace comedy —
He meted out his just applause
By rigid, fixed and proper laws.
A father once he had, no doubt,

A mother on the Island staying,
Which left him free to knock about

And gratify a taste for straying
Through crowded streets. 'T was there he found
Companionship, and grew renowned.

An ash-box served him for a bed —
As good, at least, as Moses' rushes —
And for his daily meat and bread,
He earned them with his box and brushes.
An Arab of the city's slums,
With ready tongue and empty pocket,
Unaided left to solve life's sums,
But plucky always — that was Rocket !

'T was Christmas eve, and all the day
The snow had fallen fine and fast ;
In banks and drifted heaps it lay
Along the streets. A piercing blast
Blew cuttingly. The storm was past,
And now the stars looked coldly down
Upon the snow-enshrouded town.

Ah, well it is if Christmas brings
Good-will and peace which poet sings.
How full are all the streets to-night
With happy faces, flushed and bright !
The matron in her silks and furs,
The pompous banker, fat and sleek,
The idle, well-fed loiterers,
The merchant trim, the churchman meek,
Forgetful now of hate and spite,
For all the world is glad to-night !
All, did I say? Ah, no, not all,
For sorrow throws on some its pall ;

And here, within the broad, fair city,
The Christmas time no beauty brings
To those who plead in vain for pity,
To those who cherish but the stings
Of wretchedness and want and woe,
Who never love's great bounty know,
Whose grief no kindly hands assuage,
Whose misery mocks our Christian age.
Pray ask yourself what means to them
That Christ is born in Bethlehem !

But Rocket? On this Christmas eve
You might have seen him standing where
The city's streets so interweave
They form that somewhat famous square
Called Printing House. His face was bright,
And at this gala, festive season
You could not find a heart more light —
I'll tell you in a word the reason :
By dint of patient toil in shining
Patrician shoes and Wall Street boots,
He had, within his jacket's lining,
A dollar and a half — the fruits
Of pinching, saving, and a trial
Of really Spartan self-denial.
That dollar and a half was more
Than Rocket ever owned before.
A princely fortune, so he thought,
And with those hoarded dimes and nickels

What Christmas pleasures may be bought !

A dollar and a half ! It tickles
The boy to say it over, musing
Upon the money's proper using :
" I 'll go a gobbler, leg and breast,
With cranberry-sauce and fixin's nice,
And pie, mince-pie, the very best,
And puddin' — say a double slice !
And then to doughnuts how I 'll freeze,
With coffee — guess that ere 's the cheese !
And after grub I 'll go to see
The ' Seven Goblins of Dundee.'
If this yere Christmas ain't a buster,
I 'll let yer rip my Sunday duster !"

So Rocket mused as he hurried along,

Clutching his money with grasp yet tighter,
And humming the air of a rollicking song,
With a heart as light as his clothes — or lighter.
Through Centre Street he makes his way,
When, just as he turns the corner at Pearl,
He hears a voice cry out in dismay,
And sees before him a slender girl,
As ragged and tattered in dress as he,
With hand stretched forth for charity.
In the street-light's fitful and flickering glare
He caught a glimpse of the pale, pinched face —
So gaunt and wasted, yet strangely fair,
With a lingering touch of childhood's grace

On the delicate features. Her head was bare,
And over her shoulders disordered there hung
A mass of tangled, nut-brown hair.

In misery old as in years she was young,
She gazed in his face. And oh, for the eyes —
The big, blue, sorrowful, hungry eyes ! —

That were fixed in a desperate frightened stare.
Hundreds have jostled her by to-night —

The rich, the great, the good and the wise,
Hurrying on to the warmth and light
Of happy homes — they have jostled her by,
And the only one who has heard her cry,
Or, hearing, has felt his heartstrings stirred,

Is Rocket — this youngster of coarser clay,
This gamin, who never so much as heard
The beautiful story of Him who lay
In the manger of old on Christmas day !

With artless pathos and simple speech,
She stands and tells him her pitiful tale ;
Ah, well if those who pray and preach
Could catch an echo of that sad wail.

She tells of the terrible battle for bread,
Tells of a father brutal with crime,
Tells of a mother lying dead,

At this, the gala Christmas time ;
Then adds, gazing up at the starlit sky :
“ I ’m hungry and cold, and I wish I could die ! ”

What is it trickles down the cheek
Of Rocket — can it be a tear?
He stands and stares, but does not speak;
He thinks again of that good cheer
Which Christmas was to bring; he sees
The visions of turkey and steaming pies,
The playbills — then, in place of these,
The girl's beseeching, hungry eyes;
One mighty effort, gulping down
The disappointment in his breast,
A quivering of the lip, a frown,
And then, while Pity pleads her best,
He snatches forth his cherished hoard,
And gives it to her like a lord!
“Here, freeze to that; I'm flush, yer see,
And then you needs it more 'an me!”
With that he turns and walks away,
So fast the girl can nothing say,
So fast he does not hear the prayer
That sanctifies the Winter air.
But He who blessed the widow's mite
Looked down and smiled upon the sight.

No feast of steaming pies or turkey,
No ticket for the matinée,
All drear and desolate and murky,
In truth, a very dismal day,
With dinner on a crust of bread,
And not a penny in his pocket,

A friendly ash-box for a bed —

Thus came the Christmas day to Rocket.

And yet — and here 's the strangest thing —

As best befits the festive season,

The boy was happy as a king —

I wonder can you guess the reason?

THE FAME UNSOUGHT.

ONCE there lived in an age unrecorded,
In a land far over the sea,
A poet, whom nobody lauded,
Whom few even knew to be ;
A poet whose fancy forever soared
Among the stars, whose soul outpoured
Itself in stately measures, stored
With learning and the fruit of thought.
Ah, patiently and long he wrought,
And always sang in lofty strains
Of deeds heroic, war's red stains,
And all the glory valor gains.

Thus, while he sang, the years unrecorded
Passed over the poet's head ;
And still there was no one his work applauded —
But few his lines ever read.
Then the fire, which long in his soul had blazed,
Was quenched at last ; and, perplexed, amazed,
With weary brain and aching heart,
He turned him from his cherished art.

“The love of right, the hate of wrong,
These have I woven in my song,
These have I sung in measures strong :
 But lo ! my name is all unknown —
 I thought to write it in letters of gold —
 But wearily the years have flown,
 Till now, when the singer is gray and old,
 His story remains forever untold !”

Then, as indeed most natural seemed,
 The poet's sorrow found a tongue
In song — not such as he had dreamed
 Would bring him fame, when he was young,
But only simple strains, which told
The anguish of a heart grown old
 In waiting for the buds of promise
Their leaves in fragrance to unfold.
 When lo ! the world caught up the strain,
And sang it once, and yet again,
Until the unknown poet's name
Was writ in letters of deathless fame !

STAR-LOVE.

I NTO the desert Despair I am driven,
Stung by the lashes of memory keen,
For mine is the horrible crime unforgiven,
The sin unseen !

My heart was redder than hearts of roses,
My blood was redder than reddest wine,
My dreams were like sunsets which June discloses,
For Love was mine.

I worshipped a seraph, and she for me only
Dwelt in a radiant, palpitant star ;
And night after night, through all the nights lonely,
I loved her afar.

Oh, think not this love was the sensual, common,
Every-day passion of every-day man !
In channels like this, no love for mere woman
Ever yet ran.

I turned me aside from one whose sweet being
Was wound round my own like a blossoming vine ;
Bat-blind was my soul to all save the seeing
My seraph star shine.

There, there was my heart in the heavens above me,
Wherever that bright orb held its way ;
If others should hate, or if others should love me,
What mattered it, pray ?

The song of the robin, the children's fresh laughter,
Sweet tones to me once, now discordantly jarred ;
Such sounds become senseless to him reaching after
A Love seraph-starred !

No longer to pity's appeal could I listen,
No longer find peace in simple pursuits,
For these, unto one whose star-love must glisten,
Are dead-sea fruits !

The fragrance of old I missed in the flowers,
The sunshine grew dim, the busy world tame ;
So burned my soul out with its God-given powers,
In the star's fierce flame !

The old love — the earth-love — was quenched, and
forever ;
Old yearnings, old hopes, old friends, stood afar ;
And still I went on in the one mad endeavor
To reach my star !

O planet of evil ! O siren unholy !

Give back — give back what I never may know —
That peace that was mine when, content and lonely,
I let the stars go !

IN THE MUSEUM.

CARNIVOROUS beasts from the tropical climes,
With birds resplendently feathered,
And wonderful relics of ancient times,
In the museum here are gathered.

Cetaceous fishes and slimy snakes,
And monkeys amazingly busy —
No wonder the head of the gazer aches,
No wonder his brain grows dizzy.

Inhaling the musty odor, I tread
Where all is enveloped in wonder ;
The Twelve Apostles hang over my head,
With an Indian tomahawk under.

The stuffed rhinoceros savagely glares
With his glass eye fixed and defiant,
While the hippopotamus skeleton scares
The famous Western giant.

The boneless wonder performs his acts
And bends his body double,
While Charley Ross looks on in wax,
Forgetful of all his trouble.

The Albino by no means appears at ease,
So near to the alligator ;
While the Polar Bear is inclined to freeze
To the Lightning Calculator.

The bearded lady, it seems to me,
Is a trifle too proud and airy ;
Perhaps she fancies herself to be
An heiress as well as hairy.

While the fat woman smiles in a gracious way,
And sits in her corner shady —
If flesh be grass, what a lot of hay
Could be harvested from this lady.

The skeleton stands in stockingless feet,
No flesh on his body is wasted ;
If nearer the bone the sweeter the meat,
How sweet would he be if tasted !

The painter's art before me, I see,
Some Biblical scenes discloses,
And in them Judas is shown to be
Considerably meeker than Moses.

And here — oh, strangest of nature's freaks —
Are the wild men from Molacho ;
I stand and listen while one of them speaks :
“ Say, Mike, have you got some tobacco ? ”

Birds and beasts and fishes and snakes
In the museum all so busy —
What wonder the head of the gazer aches,
What wonder his brain grows dizzy !

AUTUMN LEAVES.

THE leaves are turning yellow,
With the advent of October,
When every luckless fellow
Assumes an air that 's sober
And proceeds to write an ode upon the season of the
year
Which brings an end, presumably, to foliage and beer.

This annual lamentation,
Which the rhymster still rehearses,
Has created a stagnation
In the sale of Autumn verses ;
And therefore the subscriber would respectfully suggest
That all these sere and yellow poets proceed to take a
rest.

A multitude of reasons
For this may be presented.
For example : all the seasons
Should make us quite contented ;

And as for falling leaves, we know 't is but a natural
thing :
For if they did not take a drop they could not bud in
Spring !

And why — pray why should Autumn
Make sad these sundry singers ?
It rather should have taught 'em
That, compared with Summer's stingers,
Or the freezing breath of Winter, there 's no weather in
the year
So perfectly adapted both to punches hot and beer !

And as for this bewailing
Because of Autumn leaves,
The fellow must be ailing
Whose muse such verses weaves ;
For, if he 'd stop a moment to reflect on what he sings,
He 'd find, in fact, that Autumn leaves some very pleas-
ant things.

It leaves a man less lazy,
With less sweat upon his forehead ;
It leaves the days more hazy,
And the nights not half so torrid ;
It leaves a fellow hungrier than Summer ever could,
With appetite well-sharpened and digestive organs good.

It leaves the actors playing
In the city all so merry ;
It leaves some time for paying
The bills of January ;
It leaves your lighter ulster looking comfort'ble and fair
Which seemed to you in August a delusion and a snare.

It leaves the mornings moister,
With freshness still to sweeten ;
It leaves the toothsome oyster
To be opened up and eaten ;
It leaves the markets loaded with juiciest of fruit,
It leaves you time to renovate your last year's Winter
suit.

And so I hold the season
Should not be counted sober
For so insufficient reason
As the rhyming of October ;
And, concluding, I would say that, while such comfort
Autumn leaves,
Believe me, I'd as lief the leaves were saffron-hued as
sheaves !

HIS PRETTIEST TRICK.

IT was the Widow Skinner's
Professional boarding-house,
Where the customary dinners
Were not of quail or grouse ;
But the table it was home-like,
As the widow used to say,
With oyster-soup and turkey
On each Thanksgiving day.

Now Mrs. Skinner's boarders
Were an interesting group ;
They belonged, without exception,
To some variety troupe,
And every one among them
Was a bright particular star
(The only thing about the place
That was partic-u-lar).
There was charming Maud De Spooner,
Who sang serio-comic songs ;
And her husband, Herr Von Schooner,
Who handled red-hot tongs ;

And the famous Duster Brothers,
Of song and dance renown,
And the champion lady-jiggist,
Who had paralyzed the town.
There was also Little Tulip,
Who was often seized by the S.
For the P. of C. to Children,
And thus advertised for less
Than the cost of colored posters —
And Little Tulip's mar,
And the gent who could stand with composure
On his head on a raspberry jar ;
The lady trapeze-performer
(Who scorned the net of the law),
A brace of Egyptian jugglers,
And the man with the iron jaw —
All these at the widow's table,
A hearty and hungry group,
Sat down, on a certain Thanksgiving,
To turkey and oyster-soup.

Well had it been for those boarders,
All so hungry and hearty,
If the Great Alaska Wizard
Had not been one of the party !

The Great Alaska Wizard,
On the night before, had applied

For board to the Widow Skinner,
Who took him in with pride.
For, albeit a trifle shabby
The broadcloth suit he wore,
The widow declared she had never
Met a nicer man before ;
And that was the general verdict
When the Wizard was ushered in.
There was nothing wrong about him
Except he was very thin —
As void of solid substance
As cast-off barrel-hoops,
As thin as one of the widow's
Original oyster-soups.

Now, gathered about the table,
All so hungry and hearty,
With appetites thoroughly able,
Behold that professional party.
And behold, likewise, the turkey,
Cooked to a beautiful tan,
Immense in his outward proportions
And built on the boarding-house plan.
Cranberry-sauce, and turnips,
And celery sat in state,
And oyster-soup in abundance,
With one oyster allowed to a plate.
Well had it been with the others,
All so hungry and hearty,

If the Great Alaska Wizard
Had not been one of the party !
For he sat at the head of the table,
And smiled on the Tulip kid,
And kindly offered to show her
The prettiest trick he did.
“ I ’ll do it now,” he continued,
As he lightly rose from his chair —
“ That is, if the company ’s willing,
And our landlady does n’t care.
It is really a neat illusion,
And will give you an appetite rare.”
So, before the soup had been tasted,
Or the turkey had lost a stick,
The artists decided to witness
The Professor’s prettiest trick.

Better it were if those boarders,
Who told him to go ahead,
Had tied to their necks that turkey
And jumped in the soup instead.

“ You see,” said the suave Professor,
“ I take this soup-tureen —
It is free from all deception,
And one you have often seen —
I take it and show you the contents,
Prepared, as you know, for us,

And then, without deception,
 I proceed to dispose of it — thus ! ”
In amazement dumb the boarders
 Saw the Wizard tip the tureen,
And when it came down not an oyster,
 Not a teaspoon of soup, could be seen !
Aghast looked all the artists,
 And so did Mrs. Skinner ;
But the Wizard smiled, and only
 Looked a little thinner.

“ Now, then,” he resumed, as he finished
 The wiping-off of his chin,
“ I show you this roasted turkey —
 We all of us saw him brought in,
And know he is free from deception ;
 Now, without any fume or fuss,
But neatly, and so you can see me,
 I proceed to dispose of him — thus ! ”
With interest really painful
 They watched him devour the bird,
And not even phenomenal Tulip
 Found courage to utter a word.
And indeed it was painful — ’ t was awful
 The way that fowl disappeared ;
In less than three minutes no morsel
 Of meat to the bones adhered !

“ It ’ s simple — perfectly simple,”
 Remarked the remarkable Wizard,

As he followed the second drumstick
With the last of the stuffing and gizzard.
“There ’s no deception about it —
I ’ll do my best to be quick —
There, now, you see he is finished —
It ’s really a beautiful trick !
Merely a neat illusion —
Although, upon my word,
If you were n’t professional people,
You might think I had *caten* the bird !
I now put the cover over
This tureen, which is empty, you know,
While the bones of this excellent turkey
I wrap in this napkin so.
I ’ll now step up to the parlor,
Stamp once, and say ‘ Presto, be quick ! ’
And restore the soup and the turkey —
It ’s really my prettiest trick ! ”

Lightly, full lightly he glided
From the basement dining-room,
But the stars he left behind him
Were wrapped in Egypt’s gloom.
There came no stamp from the parlor,
There came no “ Presto, quick ! ”
The Great Alaska Wizard
Had finished his prettiest trick !

MY NOBLE RIVAL.

IN a Pullman I met her while on way
To the mountains — that is, to the White :
She was going, I found, to North Conway,
Whereat I was filled with delight.
For that was my own destination —
The spot where I'd chosen to spend
My limited Summer vacation —
And my limited cash — with a friend.

A description, I know, would be stupid
Of one so completely equipped,
As was she, with the armor of Cupid —
The description shall therefore be skipped ;
Except — and this much should be added
For the sake of true art, be it said —
Her figure was perfect, not padded,
And her hair had its roots in her head,

While the curve of her chin was exquisite,
And a something about her — a dash
(This is n't describing her, is it?)
Electrified one like a flash.

I saw — for I could not help seeing —
That her blue eyes a power could wield —
That love was the end of her being —
That her No. 3 boots were French-heeled.

I helped her alight at the station,
And also her weazen-faced mother ;
The latter made some observation
Concerning gratuitous bother,
At which I looked modest, and merely
Remarked 't was no bother at all ;
While my charmer said : " Thank you, sincerely ;
We stop at the Kearsarge — call ! "

I accepted this kind invitation,
To say so perhaps is redundant ;
And I found she enjoyed conversation,
For beaux were by no means abundant.
So, strolling along the piazza,
Or lazily lounging together,
We chatted, discovering there 's a
Remarkable theme in the weather.

In a week we were closest companions —
We soared on invisible wings,
Explored all the mountains and canyons,
Collected ferns, fossils, and things ;
And I read in her eyes a confession
Which kindled love's spark to a flame —

In short, I had made an impression,
When that horrid French nobleman came.

The Duke Contor something or other,
She called him, and drew a long breath ;
And for me — well, I was her brother,
She would hold me as such until death !
And the Duke — I really must meet him —
He had done things that very few men did,
He needed no charm to complete him —
In short, he was perfectly splendid.

I heard and was silent. I could n't
Reproach her, nor chide, nor rebuke ;
For where is the maiden who would n't
Have done the same thing for a Duke ?
But, turning, I stood like a dumb thing,
For there, on the nearest of benches —
Yes, there, in the Duke Contor something —
Was the barber who shaved me at French's !

I packed up my things on the morrow,
While the Duke, to my secret delight,
But the landlord's unspeakable sorrow,
Disappeared from North Conway that night.
And now is the fickle one lonely —
And for me, I have trials but few,
While the Duke Contor something is only
A conduketor on Third Avenue !

A CURIOUS WANT.

"WANTED — A man who understands the five-cent restaurant business." — *New York Herald Advertisement.*

WHAT aggregated wisdom must
That fellow be possessed of,
Who 's fit to seize on such a trust
And stand the seasoning test of.

No title which the savant flaunts,
Nor yet degrees from college,
Can probe the five-cent restaurant's
Unpenetrated knowledge.

Think of things a man must know
To hold this rare position !
How far the average shank should go
Before it fills its mission ;

How many plates a pound of beef
Will yield in five-cent slices ;
How much of cabbage, to a leaf,
Leaves profit at these prices ;

How pie-crust gains economy
If baked when dry or moister ;
How many quarts of soup can be
Produced from one fair oyster.

And he must be, whate'er betides,
More lamblike than his mutton ;
Appease the man whose fish-ball hides
A too obtrusive button ;

Explain to those of doubting minds
About the butter's color,
And reconcile the chap who finds
A hairpin in his cruller.

Pray, what to him are life's small sums
On whom the truth thus flashes —
This sage who sees whence sausage comes,
Who really knows what hash is ?

In short, the *Herald's* curious want
A mighty truth condenses :
To run a five-cent restaurant
Takes all of man's five senses !

AZARIAH E. BRIERY AND HIS DIARY.

WITH the dawn of the bright New Year,
In chirography bold and clear,
The young Azariah E. Briery
Set out to keep a diary.

On the first of January
He wrote as follows : " A very
Bleak and blustering day.
Made calls on Alice and May,
Miss Lamont, Miss Smith and Miss Pratt.
All at home. Wore new cravat.
Hope May did not fail to note
The sealskin-cuffs on my coat.
Invited Miss S. to attend
The theatre next week, with a friend.
'T will cost five dollars, I think.
Drank nothing — found nothing to drink.
Had salad and strawberry-ice —
I think keeping a diary 's nice."

On the second, the entry read thus :
" At store as usual. Had fuss

With landlady, touching her bill.
Must pay her or leave — which I will.
Met M—— on Broadway by chance ;
Usual luck — had on my old pants !”

On the third, in pencil, it read :
“At store. Snowed some, went to bed.
Am sleepy and can't find the ink —
A diary 's a nuisance, I think !”

On the fourth, events were thus told :
“Got up. Went to bed. Very cold !”

On the fifth, things were made briefer yet,
Being simply described, “Warm and wet.”

On the sixth, of the task he was rid
In this manner — “Forgot what I did.”

And there was the end of the diary
Of young Azariah E. Briery !

HOW THE CATCHER WAS CAUGHT.

FULL tall was he, with sinewy muscles,
And shoulders broad and full and square,
With limbs designed for terrible tussles,
And the regular prize-ring crop of hair ;
And he played, with skill exceedingly fine,
The catcher's place in a Western nine.

He was rich in all of the manly graces —
A very Apollo from head to heel ;
And, though he was good at the stealing of bases,
He never was base enough, surely, to steal.
A foul, indeed, his pulses stirred,
But he never was foul in deed or word.

As fair was she as the sun uprising,
A blooming maiden, with luscious lips,
Whose dainty completeness was really surprising,
Down to her rosy finger-tips ;
And she often sat on the stand in the shade,
And saw the games which that catcher played.

And whenever he seized on a hot one nicely,
Or caught a foul with agility,
She clapped her hands, for that was precisely
The sort of thing she wanted to see ;
For much did this blooming maiden pine
For the catcher who caught in that Western nine.

Wherefore it was meet, when the games were over,
The catcher, so brave and manly and tall,
Should frequently play the part of a lover
In a game considerably older than ball ;
And if an occasional error he made,
'T was simply because with a miss he played.

For, spite of her love, this maid was addicted
To ways most coquettish and naughty and sly,
And the man of the diamond-field was restricted
To taking love's favors, as 't were, on the sly ;
And, though she protested at kissing, I doubt
If the maid by the catcher was ever put out !

At that dangerous hour, while yet the sun lingers
Above the horizon, and Nature is dumb,
He would hold her small hand between his jammed
fingers,
And stroke her soft hair with his stiff-jointed thumb ;
And often their walks were extended so late,
'T was eleven o'clock when she crossed the home-plate !

At last he mustered up courage and told her
How fondly he longed to make her his wife ;
And she rested her head on his manly shoulder
While he eagerly asked “ would she give him a life ? ”
And he hinted with emphasis, leaving no doubt
That, should she refuse him, he 'd surely strike out !

'T was the umpire Love that gave the decision ;
The maiden permitted her lips to be kissed,
And then, looking up with a slightly blurred vision,
She blushingly murmured : “ Why, yes — I 'll as-
sist ! ”
So the game to a right happy ending was brought,
And thus did it happen the catcher was caught.

THE FREE TICKET.

A PIOUS man was Jonathan Snow,
The man who never had been to a show ;
A Christian man, who said his prayers,
And sowed his seed where sinful tares
Could choke it not. Sedate and calm,
He loved good cider, a sermon, or psalm,
And lived a life that was free from blame,
As pure and spotless as his name.

Now, of all the things that Jonathan did —
And never under a bushel he hid
The candle of virtue that burned in his breast —
Of all good things, I repeat, the best,
According to Jonathan's notion, was,
That he never had been to a show, " Because,"
As he frequently said, " a show is a place
Where the Devil himself is put to disgrace ! "

It happened that once a circus came
To the village where Jonathan dwelt, and the same

Was known as the Mighty Miraculous
Egyptian Menagerie and Circus ;
And wonderful were the things, I ween,
Which on the flaring bills were seen ;
Lions and tigers and monsters immense —
And the price of admission was fifty cents.

On the very day that the show arrived,
And the boys about the canvas hived,
Jonathan Snow, in the grocery store,
Discoursed as he never discoursed before
On the sinfulness of circus-es,
Which are run by Satan, he said, to please
The wicked of earth, and lead them in
To the ways of darkness, death and sin.

“ Fur it stands to reason,” said Jonathan Snow,
“ That them as finds delight in a show
Must be of a low and vulgar kind,
Without any piety into their mind,
But full of the sins of the flesh ; and, for me,
I would sooner jump into the bottomless sea
Than go to this Mighty Miraculous
Egyptian Menagerie and Circus ! ”

While Jonathan thus was moved to deplore,
It chanced that a stranger came into the store —
A quiet, respectable chap, and he
Belonged to the M. E. M. and C.

He heard what Jonathan had to say,
Then smiled in a sort of peculiar way,
And, drawing nearer, he said to Snow :
“ My friend, here ’s a ticket to go to the show ! ”

In mute amazement Jonathan scanned
The card which the showman had put in his hand ;
Then he laid it away in his pocket with care,
And, glancing around with a pious air,
He remarked, as he sauntered out of the store :
“ I never attended a cirkis afore,
But I reckon now that I ’ll have to go,
As I ’ve got a free ticket, to this here show ! ”

THE CASE OF YOUNG BROWN.

NEAR the corner of Grand Street I met him —
I think it was Saturday night ;
He asked me the way to Avenue A,
And I sought to direct him aright.

An innocent-looking young fellow,
With manner both modest and mild,
And a beardless face of delicate grace —
He seemed as fresh as a child.

Cohoes was his home, he informed me,
He had relatives here in the town ;
They used to reside on the easterly side —
Perhaps I had met Colonel Brown ?

I told the confiding young stranger
That I knew Colonel Brown — Allston T. ;
But he shook his head, and pensively said,
His relative's name was C. D.

“ And therein,” continued the stranger,
“ My relative ’s somewhat like me,
For ” — heaving a sigh — “ I cannot deny
That I am likewise see-dy ! ”

Then, seized with a sudden desire
Of befriending the friendless young Brown,
I told him of snares into which, unawares,
People fall when they visit this town.

I warned him against the temptations
That lie in the pathway of those
Who tread in the maze of Gotham’s ways —
Which are different somewhat from Cohoes.

I called his especial attention
To the sharpers who style themselves “ Gents,”
Who are given to sin and to taking folks in,
And whose words are a hollow pretence.

“ They will fleece you,” I said, “ if you trust ’em ;
They will hound you wherever you stir ;
So, if you are wise, do what I advise,
And give ’em the shake, as it were.”

I mentioned the many devices
By which the unwary are caught ;
And told him how those who come from Cohoes
By the sharks are eagerly sought.

He listened with strictest attention
To all that I chose to say ;
And grasped my hand as he turned down Grand
In search of Avenue A ;

While I, in a mood philanthropic
At having assisted young Brown,
And given advice, both weighty and nice,
Continued my journey uptown.

And then I discovered — Great Cæsar !
My watch and my chain — could it be ?
I uttered some oaths at the wolf in sheep's clothes
Who had made such a victim of me !

That innocent-looking young fellow
Who told such preposterous lies —
Who took my advice, both weighty and nice,
Had taken my watch likewise !

And here, by way of conclusion,
I have only this much to put down :
I shall always suppose that youth from Cohoes
Was skilful in doing folks Brown.

AT THE DAIRY FAIR.

“ **H**OW pleasant a thing,” said she,
“ A dairy maid to be ! ”

“ Aw — yes — no doubt,” he said,
“ But their hands are awfully red ! ”

“ To arise when the birds first sing —
It’s too lovely for anything ! ”

“ Aw — yes — although I am told
At that hour it’s dreadfully cold ! ”

“ And then in the morning fine
To milk the lowing kine ! ”

“ Aw — yes — but it is apt to get stale
When the kine kick over the pail ! ”

“ And then in the sweet-smelling vats
To work the butter in pats ! ”

“ Aw — yes — it’s nice, and all that,
For those who can do the thing pat ! ”

“ But really, now, Charles, behold
That dish with its burden of gold ! ”

“ Aw — yes — very nice — just so —
But then it ain’t gold, you know ! ”

“ Oh were I a poet to utter
The praises of such sweet butter ! ”

“ Aw — yes — but, Maud, if you please,
That is n’t butter — it’s cheese ! ”

THE CANNIBAL'S LOVE.

TO the faculty of stuffing
Other folk no claim I lay ;
Hence, in telling you there's nothing
Left of Hannibal Tyndall Gray,
Except a head and body,
'T is the gospel truth I say ;
For he gave in the cause of science
The rest of himself away.
And the secret of how he did it
Lies hidden in this here lay.

It was the Beautiful Cannibal,
From the far-off ocean isles,
Who drew the innocent Hannibal
Into her dangerous wiles.
Much had she travelled, this lady,
In sunshiny weather and showery,
Until she brought up for a season
At a museum in the Bowery.

And there, at the door, a painting
Of this marvellous creature hung,
Wherein she was shown to be eating
Two infants, tender and young.
Thereby attracted, young Hannibal
Cheerfully paid the price
Of admission to see the Cannibal,
At once so naughty and nice.
What cruel fate directed
Young Hannibal's feet that day,
And why, through love of science,
Should he give himself away?

Unheeding the stuffed anaconda,
The terrible figures in wax,
The Patagonian Wonder,
The blood-stained battle-axe,
The Lightning-calculator,
The man without any arms,
The Aged Alligator,
And the Brobdingnagian charms
Of the Fat Woman, guileless Hannibal
Through the museum quickly hies him,
Till he comes to the Beautiful Cannibal,
Who forthwith hungrily eyes him.
Oh, you 'd never have thought, to see her,
That she 'd exercised her jaw
On the sirloin of both her parents,
And the ribs of her mother-in-law !

Yet such was her record, as told by
The solicitor of the show.
(Perhaps you don't know that "solicit"
Is professional slang for "blow.")
Before this lovable creature
Susceptible Hannibal stood ;
He noted her every feature,
As a student of science should ;
Her liquid eyes of azure,
Her gracefully rounded figure,
Her waist of dainty measure —
The fat woman's wrist was bigger !
And all the charms of her person
Were fully exposed to view,
For she cut her dresses scanty,
As cannibal ladies do.
Too much, too much for science
Did this Cannibal Hebe prove ;
Too much likewise for my hero,
Who was "mashed" before he could move.
Then lost in unfeigned admiration,
He sighed and murmured, " Ah, well,
Can a belle of her seeming station
Be indeed a Cannie belle ? "
(Which the same was a kind of outrage
Rarely committed by Hannibal,
And shows to what depths he had fallen,
Even then, on account of the Cannibal.)

It will ever remain a mystery
To Hannibal Tyndall Gray,
The full and authentic history
Of that most momentous day ;
But at four o'clock, he remembers,
He found himself chatting away
In the very friendliest manner
With the Cannibal all so gay ;
At five, some things he had told her
Which are dangerous always to say ;
At six, with her head on his shoulder,
They watched the twilight linger,
And 't was then, grown suddenly bolder,
She asked him first for a finger !
"Just one," she softly pleaded.
Quoth he, "What for, my sweet?"
At the which, with modest demeanor,
She answered shyly, "To eat!"
Oh, what could he do, soft-hearted,
Love-blinded Hannibal Gray?
Came never a sigh as he parted
With the first of his fingers that day,
Yet that was the sad beginning
Of his giving himself away !
He watched her devour the member,
Which she did with voracious haste,
And it kindled the smouldering ember
Of her cannibalistic taste.

Thus oft has a glass of cider,
Though sweet as the airs in "Martha,"
Led on to ten nights in a bar-room,
According to T. S. Arthur.

At an early hour next morning
To the museum Hannibal went —
On his hand he wore a bandage,
On his face a look of content.
What cared he for one little finger,
If it satisfied *her*? not a cent!
But there was the rub — she was n't
By any means satisfied!
That left-hand little finger,
Which the guileless youth had supplied,
Was merely an appetizer;
And when she pouted and cried,
And said she 'd had nothing substantial
Since her Uncle Yoko died —
Why, it hardly needs to be stated
That her lover was touched to the core,
And he up and amputated
And gave her two fingers more!

Ah, would at this point there were nothing
To add to the tale of my friend;
But I 've said I 'm not given to stuffing,
So here goes to the bitter end.

At the close of a week young Hannibal
Had given, in varying sums,
To that soul-enslaving Cannibal,
Six fingers and both of his thumbs !
He had also declared his passion,
Which she heard with a sigh and a tear,
And her head on his shoulder reclining,
The while she chewed off his right ear.
When he sued for her hand she gave it,
With only these stipulations :
That he 'd give her his when she wanted
The same for her daily rations.
So his hands they followed his fingers,
And his arms they followed his hands,
And still for more she pleaded,
That creature from cannibal lands.
Then half of a leg he gave her ;
“ Oh, Hannibal, this is too much ! ”
She cried, — but she liked the flavor,
And that night he went home on a crutch.
Thus, little by little, it happened
That Hannibal Tyndall Gray,
Through love's infatuation,
Gave most of himself away.
And when he 'd no more to give her —
Nor finger, nor hand, nor limb —
Behold, that Beautiful Cannibal
Of a sudden soured on him !

And to make his cup more bitter,
On the day when to wed her he hoped,
He learned that with the solicitor
His Cannibal had eloped !

She left a brief note, saying
She hoped he 'd forget and forgive 'er :
That indeed she 'd really loved him
With all her heart and liver,
Yet she thought it her duty to leave him
In this somewhat Frenchy fashion,
Else he might be wholly devoured
By her too-devouring passion !
In a postscript she said the solicitor
Had solicited long to defend her —
That she 'd found him soft, and she 'd miss it or
Hereafter she'd find him tender !

To-day, among the monstrosities,
Where of yore sat the Beautiful Cannibal,
The greatest of curiosities
Is the armless and legless Hannibal ;
And forever he sets at defiance
The truth in a shocking way,
Maintaining he gave for science
The most of himself away.

ODE TO AUTUMN.

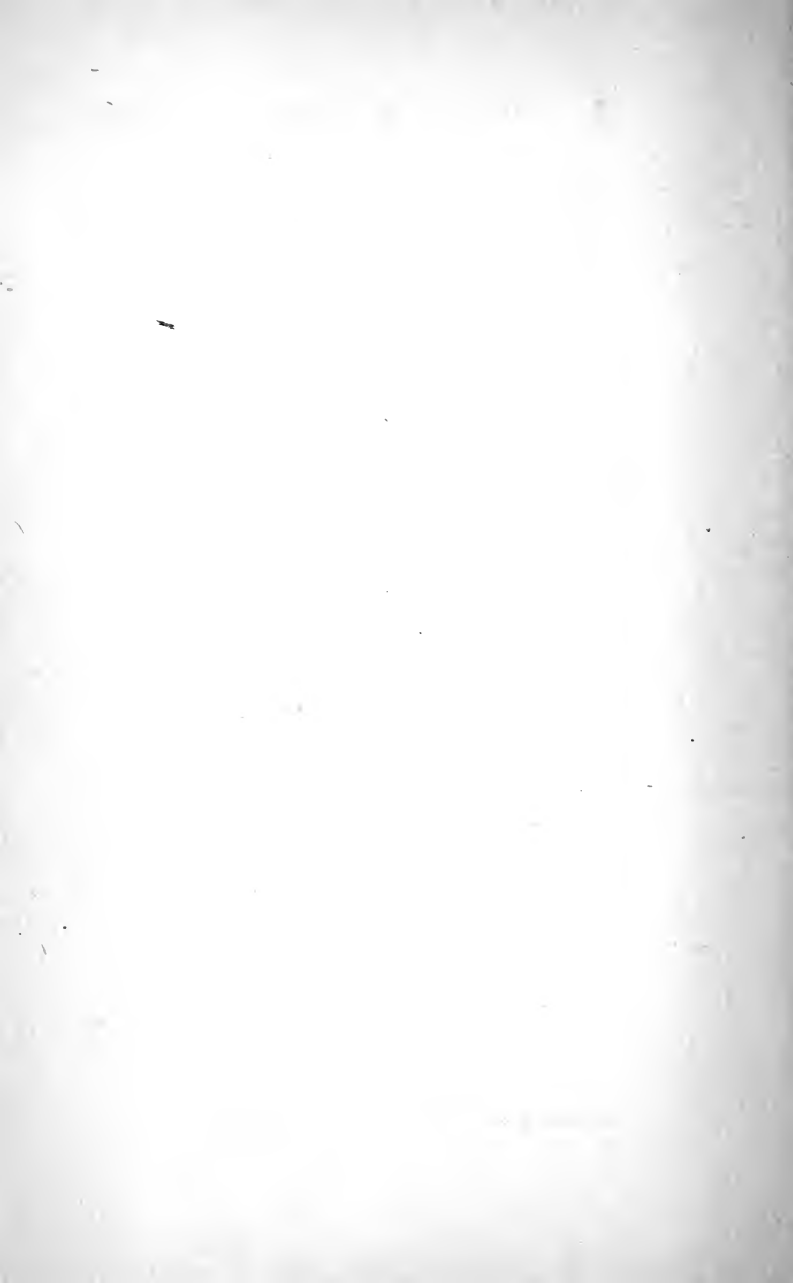
WITH OYSTER SAUCE.

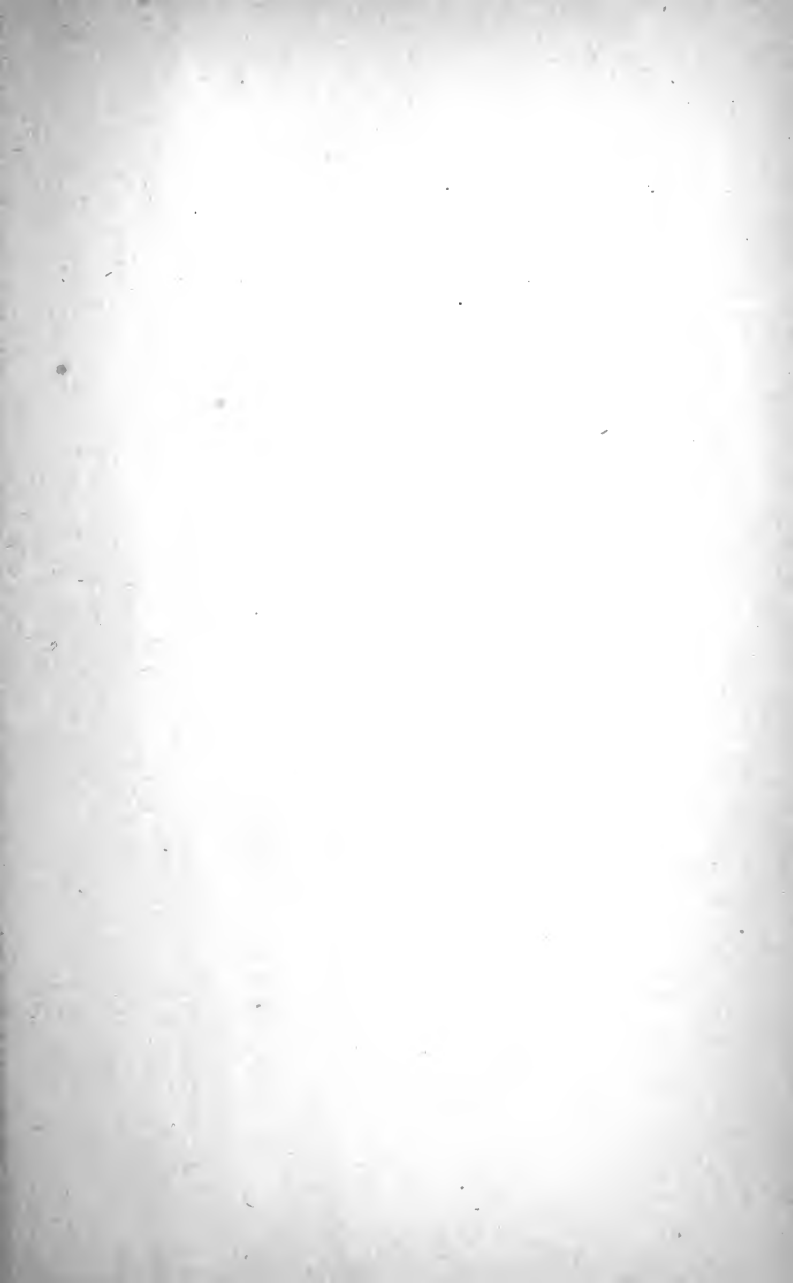
I JOIN not with the bards who sing
Of gloomy Autumn, bleak and drear
But praise the noble months that bring
The grand fruition of the year.
The tasselled plumes of corn wave high,
The barns are full of yellow grain ;
A mellow light is in the sky,
And R ! the oyster comes again.

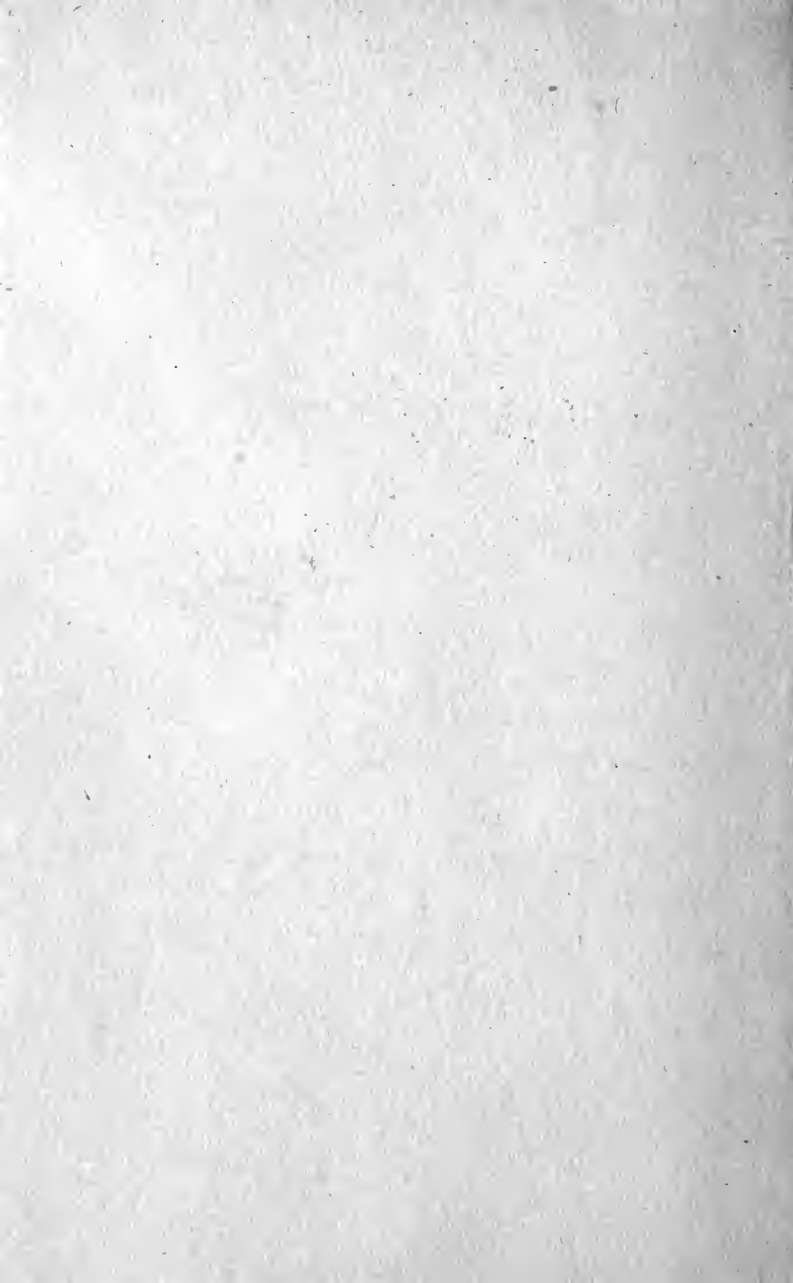
The buds of Spring, the early flowers,
The Summer's wealth and tropic heat,
Are preludes to the perfect hours
When Autumn makes our joys complete.
The trees a rarer foliage boast,
Nature her finest tints unlocks,
And lo ! 'tis time to try a roast
Of Blue-Points or of Saddle-Rocks.

I gaze upon the distant sea,
Where from the hills the far shore slopes ;
I think my ship will come to me —
The ship that bears my happy hopes —
On some such bracing day as this,
A perfect day, without a flaw ;
But if it should, I would not miss
A good two dozen Norwalks, raw !

Hail, noble Autumn, let them sing
Of melancholy days who may —
The tribute of a verse I bring
To cheer thee on thy sturdy way.
Let Summer boast her roses red,
Let Spring to violets give birth,
To me the Autumn's oyster-bed
Exceeds them all in solid worth !







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